The WIND of COMPLICATION

by

SUSAN ERTZ

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Henry and the Muse

Henry and the Muse

IT is rarely true of mothers that they love their unsuccessful children more than they love their successful ones; they are merely, in their pity and loyalty, anxious that the world should think they do. Anxious, moreover, that the failure should think so too.

That he was his mother's favorite son was one of Henry Sharland's few profound convictions. She preferred him, he believed, to the robust and flourishing Ernest and Robert—therefore he was superior to them. He took pride in the fact that he lacked every one of their qualities. He had no ambitions whatsoever. He hated work or any sort of effort. He couldn't, poor soul, concentrate on anything long enough to finish it, whether it were a jig-saw puzzle, the latest book, or the mowing of the front lawn. He was an odd and unhealthy child born into a particularly normal and healthy family. A throwback, probably, for in two generations of Sharlands and Gwynnes there had been no one in the least like him.

If his mother grieved over him, she grieved in secret, and it was not until he had reached his

twenty-fourth birthday that she began to grow seriously concerned about him. He was quite content, it appeared, to do nothing whatever for the rest of his days. He was content to moon about the village, to sit about the house, to play little, harmless practical jokes on Laura, the cook-general. Mrs. Sharland found the contempt that her two elder sons felt for her poor Henry hard to bear. And not only they, but her friends as well took her to task about him.

"You pamper him," they said. "Turn him out-of-doors. Make him work. It's high time he did. Let him scratch for himself."

But she had no desire whatever to turn him out, and no belief, either, in the efficacy of such a step. It wasn't only that she dreaded having to live alone; the idea of Henry scratching for a living was ludicrous. He wouldn't scratch long. He would either succumb or return miserably to the maternal roost.

And he was companionable enough, especially when he wasn't trying to show off. Then he was apt to be very tiresome indeed as he had a way of repeating, parrot-like, any sayings that struck him as clever or odd, and, having no opinions of his own, he was overhospitable to the opinions of others, particularly those that, being cheap, sounded profound.

He turned white with fury when Robert sent him a second-hand set of Kipling for his birthday.

"Kipling! Good Heavens! Kipling! All about soldiers and strong men and the empire and the Queen."

"Well," said his mother, "surely those are all good things."

It was all so hopelessly out of date, he explained, making futile gestures with his long arms. As for the empire, it was decaying, and the sooner it decayed the better.

"The sooner we become a second-rate power," he declared, fidgeting with his collar, and feeling nervous lest he should have forgotten what he wanted to quote, "the better. Then perhaps we shall stop being a race of beef-eating Philistines, and poetry and the arts will have a chance to flourish."

"It's strange you should talk like that," his mother protested. "If you cared anything for poetry and the arts—but you don't."

"I dislike them less than I dislike most things," returned Henry.

"Well, I often wish," she said, seizing the opportunity to slip in a forlorn hope of hers, "that you would try to write. There have been several writers

in the Sharland family, and one quite famous one in mine."

Henry's upper lip expressed contempt.

"If I did write," he said, "it would be worse than useless. Look at the taste of the public to-day."

She tried not to mind his saying this.

"The public has all sorts of tastes," she told him quietly. "It likes every sort of thing. And never in the history of the world has it been more tolerant."

He shook his head.

"I would never be understood."

She blushed for him and changed the subject.

Poor Henry! But after all, he had no bad habits. He spent hardly any money; he was kind to children in a patronizing and grown-up way, and he did not dislike animals. Cats he admired very much, for he said their thought-processes interested him. Sometimes he forgot himself and was quite simple and natural, and didn't try to cover up his lack of wits with smart sayings. And sometimes he was boisterous and lively and laughed very loudly, and enjoyed chasing the hens, and liked to dress up in ridiculous clothes.

At such times Mrs. Sharland told herself that there really was more in Henry than met the eye.

If only she could manage to persuade Robert and Ernest and the world in general that there was! Their contempt wounded her cruelly. And because she was so often unhappy and anxious she sought solace in her own room overlooking the garden, and in her own thoughts. And one day she made up her mind that she would try to write.

As a girl she had written a little, and had been told by friends that she showed promise, but she married young and fell on unprosperous times, and the children came, and her husband died, and there was no time for writing. Now, while Henry was away on long, rambling walks, or amusing himself with cheap magazines, she began again. She tried verses, and sometimes essays. She thought the verses better than the essays, but there was no one to whom she could show them, or to whom she could go for advice. One day in early spring she wrote a little poem that really pleased her. It went as follows:

Some see God's finger only in the might
Of towering iron peaks whose icy heads
Scoff at the Summer and the dark embrace
Of clambering pines; in blasted river-beds,
In chasms and glaciers, and the race
Of giant storms. But I

See God in quiet fields where daisies turn
Their faces to the sun. Here at my door
An earthen pot encloses palest shoots.
I bend above them, filled with silent awe
To feel His impulse stirring at the roots.

She was amazed at herself when she had finished this. She read it over and over, sometimes aloud and sometimes to herself. She liked it. In rhyming lines she had managed to express the thoughts that had come to her as she was looking at her seedlings the day before. She put the poem into a drawer, and a few days later she took it out and read it again.

"Did I really write that?" she asked herself.

She now definitely decided to write nothing but poetry, and worked for two hours every day. She was presently surprised at the facility with which she was able to put her thoughts into meter, and she found that the most unexpected fancies came to her. She wrote a poem about rain in the night, and another about moths. She wrote steadily for six months, and at the end of that time she sent half a dozen of the poems she liked best to a magazine that gave an unusual amount of space to poetry. A week later she received this astounding letter from the editor:

DEAR MADAM,

I have to thank you for the six poems you sent to me. I like them very much. I like them so well, in fact, that I propose, with your permission, to publish them, although you only asked me to criticize them. They have a quite unusual charm, and I shall be happy to receive as many more from your pen as you care to send me.

There followed an offer which she considered fair, even generous, and as she sat reading and re-reading the letter her face was flushed and her eyes were shining. This thing was almost unbelievable. It might quite easily happen to other people, but to happen to oneself—! She was so stirred and excited by it that she didn't answer when she presently heard Henry calling her, but slipped out of her room and out of the house by means of the back staircase, to go for a walk, alone.

She was nearing sixty. She was the type of woman you might see facing you any day in a London omnibus, or doing her shopping with a basket on her arm in any village in England. And now she had discovered that she could write things the world was willing to read and to pay for. She had always felt a longing to find some means of expression. She had believed she was expressing herself

in her children, but as they grew up she realized that they did not express her at all. Ernest was—well, earnest. Solid, good and dull. Robert was a clever business man and a satisfactory son, and very little else; and although she loved them both she saw their defects. And Henry was just—Henry.

"If it had only been Henry instead of me!" she said to herself as she walked rapidly away from the house. She felt a sort of shame at finding herself the possessor of a gift—small and flickering though her light might be—that she had always longed to discover in one of her sons—particularly in Henry. Surely, surely, she thought, that oddness of his must mean something. Eccentricity she looked upon as the matrix wherein jewels are found. People who were so different from other people ought to possess some special aptitude denied to the common herd. But the jewel of Henry's genius was as yet undiscovered.

It was indeed, she thought, a strange world.

She wrote to the editor the next day. She thanked him for his interest, and accepted his offer. And then as she was nearing the end of the letter one of those thoughts came to her that come now and again to most of us—thoughts that strike so sharply across the normal currents of our minds as to make us feel that they have come to us from out-

side ourselves, so unconscious are we of the cerebrations that led to them.

"I wish," she wrote, eyes somewhat dilated and lips parted as though she were surprised at the words she was writing, "to publish these poems under the name of Henry Sharland instead of using my own name, Mary Gwynne Sharland. I hope you will be good enough to keep my real identity a secret."

Then she went out quickly the moment she had stamped it, and dropped it into the letter-box, which was situated in a wall a hundred yards away. As the letter left her fingers—fingers that were inclined to cling to it lest their owner should change her mind—she thought exultingly: "Perhaps Ernest and Robert will think better of Henry now."

She decided not to break the news to Henry for some time—not until the poems were actually published. And when the time came at last, and she had the magazine actually in her hands, her courage threatened to leave her. She maneuvered him into the garden eventually, and there, after a struggle with herself, she began:

"Henry, I've done something you may not like at all, and I feel I ought to tell you about it. At the time I thought it was just a little thing, but now I—I'm rather frightened."

"If it's anything to do with investments," said Henry, who loathed business matters, "I'd rather not hear about it."

"Oh, no, it isn't that. I never interfere with Robert. It's something quite different."

She looked at her youngest son, and the appearance he presented was not encouraging to her. He was wearing an old tweed coat to which clung, covering every inch of space, innumerable burrs, placed there by himself. It was a work which had occupied him the entire morning. He had scoured the countryside for the burrs, and the result seemed to please him, though he had to take great care not to lean back in his chair. He would presently occupy himself by picking them all off again, for it was in this way, and in similar ways, that he whiled away the hours. His mother thought it wise to make no reference to his appearance.

"You know, Henry," she went on, "how I've always longed for you to discover some talent. I always feel certain that there are things hidden away in you that only need developing."

He removed one of the burrs from his coat with his long, white fingers and examined it. "If I hadn't been delicate," he remarked, "I dare say I might have been a great violinist."

"But you've so little ear for music," she reminded him.

"You don't know," he told her, "nobody knows, what wonderful harmonies I sometimes have in my brain."

"Well—a composer—possibly. No, I'm almost certain it could never have been music. Literature, perhaps——"

"When there is a public that appreciates the best," he said, "I dare say I shall write."

He leaned back in his chair, but instantly sat upright again with an ejaculation of pain. She sighed. He gave her no help.

"You'll be surprised to hear," she told him, "that I've been trying to write myself. I've written quite a lot of short poems lately, and some of them"—she held up the magazine—"have just been published in this."

"You have?"

He stared, his mouth open. A lock of his straight, lank hair had fallen over his forehead.

"Yes. The editor is very encouraging. He wants me to send more, and of course I shall."

He went on staring.

"But you never told me!"

"No. I thought I wouldn't, at first. I wanted to find out if they were any good."

"Well, I don't suppose they are."

This rather crushing remark spurred her on. "*Blackhill's* don't accept things unless they have merit," she protested. "They can't possibly be bad. But what I wanted you to know was this: I decided not to publish them under my own name—Mary Gwynne Sharland—it seemed to me so obviously the name of an elderly woman. I wanted—some other name."

"What for?"

"Oh, I don't know. I did. And your name sounded so much younger and so much more interesting, so I used it, Henry. I hope you don't mind."

Once more his mouth dropped open.

"But—but then people will think I wrote them."

"Yes, I suppose they will. But they're really not bad. I thought it would be such a good thing if people knew you wrote."

"But I don't write."

"No, I meant if they thought you did. After all, it's only a *nom de plume.*"

Henry turned this over in his mind, his eyes fixed on nothing.

"I don't care," he said finally, and then with a touch of pomposity, "if my name's any good to you." He held out a hand. "Let's have a look at them."

She tendered him the open magazine.

"Verses," he read, "by Henry Sharland." Below his name there appeared in large, attractive type three short poems. They were called "A Country Post Office," "The Young Thrush," and "Thunder."

She saw that he was distinctly impressed.

The poems were charming. They did not depart startlingly from the type of poetry admired in the nineteenth century, and yet there was about them a refreshing flavor of the twentieth. And although Henry was quite unaware of this, he was nevertheless impressed and pleased.

He read them over several times, a look of gratification in his pale eyes.

"Have I got any more coming out soon?" he inquired with an eagerness unusual in him.

"There'll be three more next month," she told him, "and I sent some more off yesterday. I do hope they'll like them."

"Of course they'll like them," said Henry, not without a touch of resentment in his voice. "They'd better like them."

She smiled at him and went away, leaving him to sit there in his ridiculous coat and re-read the poems. A few minutes later she heard him in the kitchen reading them aloud to Laura. He seemed

to find her admiration pleasing, and not at all embarrassing.

Not many days after this he received letters from both Robert and Ernest. Ernest said that while he thought writing poetry was a poor occupation for a man, he was nevertheless thankful that Henry was now beginning to do *something,* and he urged him to go on with the good work. Henry considered this letter extremely offensive. Robert was less tactless, but he seemed more pleased on his mother's account than on Henry's.

"Neither of them," Henry said to his mother, "is capable of understanding. Because they can't write themselves, they have nothing but pitying contempt for those who can. But I suppose all poets have had to endure this sort of thing from their relations."

Mrs. Sharland was forced to realize that Henry was now speaking and thinking exactly as though he had actually written the poems, and though the thought distressed her she told herself that it was bound to be so. What caused her even greater anxiety was the knowledge that she was causing Henry to lie, both in his life and in his words. She had not, in the beginning, visualized this, and she feared very much the effect it might have on his moral fiber. She tried to counteract it by talking

to him about it, telling him that while she loved him to have all the praise and the credit, she hoped he wouldn't forget that it was all a game of "let's pretend."

On the other hand, she saw with profound gratification how differently Henry was now looked upon by the village people—especially by the vicar, who had always rather despised him. She persuaded herself then that any harm it might do him was more than offset by the good. And meanwhile, with unfailing industry, she wrote and wrote.

For some time she corrected him, in private, when he talked about "my poems," but after a while she ceased to do so. For it soon became apparent to her that Henry was beginning to take an intelligent interest in poetry, and never before in his life had he shown any interest in anything. To foster this interest she presented him with the checks as they came in. It was his own money, she told him.

She rejoiced in secret when he sent to London for the standard works. He read all kinds of poetry, but to him there were only two kinds of poets, living and dead. He liked very few of the latter, though he always spoke well of Shelley, but the live ones pleased him very much. The moderns, he said, had the right idea. And one day he came into his mother's room while she was writing, and sat down

just out of her range of vision without speaking. She put down her pen and turned to look at him.

"Well, dear?"

Henry opened and shut his mouth and looked at her. She had to prompt him a second time. "Well, Henry, what is it?"

He picked up her paper knife and ran it thoughtfully around inside the heel of his shoe, staring as he did so at the wall just over her head. Then he inserted it between his collar and his neck, and seemed to enjoy its coolness.

"I just wanted to say something to you," he finally and unnecessarily announced.

"Yes, I see you do. What is it?"

"I think," he managed to say at last, "that I'm behind the times. I think I write old-fashioned stuff."

She was nettled by this.

"Kindly bear in mind, Henry, that you write nothing at all. If you mean that I write old-fashioned stuff, say so."

He fidgeted in his chair.

"Well, you know what I mean. I mean—why don't we write a different sort of poetry? More modern and more—pictorial. You know. With more attention to—" he hesitated—"to onomatopœia."

"Good heavens!" she cried. "What on earth have you been reading?"

"Oh, I've been investigating a little. I've been reading things. It seems to me that we're hopelessly out of date. All our stuff's too pretty-pretty."

She was silent for a moment.

"If you mean you'd like me to write the sort of poetry that is all about ugly things and has no beauty in it whatever; the violent, explosive sort that has a certain vogue, I assure you it's quite impossible. I can't do it, and I won't."

He sat for some time frowning and ruffling his hair, while she made designs with her pen on a bit of waste-paper. Then he got up.

"Oh, well, never mind. I only thought—it doesn't matter."

He went to the door.

"But, Henry—" she called after him, distressed.

He didn't come back. She presently saw him in the garden pushing the lawn mower aimlessly about the lawn, making curved patterns in the grass that added nothing to the general effect. She sighed and tried to go on with her work.

Some months later she received a letter from the editor of *Blackhill's Magazine* that completely bewildered her. He wrote:

DEAR MRS. SHARLAND,

I am returning the last poem you sent me, called "To a Dead Dog," and I do not return it without a protest. Don't, I beg of you, experiment in this sort of thing. It is such a sudden and complete departure from your usual manner that I can hardly believe it comes from your pen. I don't like it; I hope it is no more than an experiment, and I hope it is the last of its kind. Mr. Phillips, of Crighton & Phillips, the well-known publishers, has approached me on the subject of issuing your collected verse in the not-far-distant future, and you will doubtless be hearing from him yourself. I did not, I need hardly say, show him "To a Dead Dog." Trusting that you will take my little lecture in good part.

I am,

Faithfully yours,

MONCRIEFF DAWSON

Still bewildered, she examined the inside of the envelope, and found that she had overlooked a folded sheet. She took it out and looked at it, feeling herself go hot and cold all over as she did so. She read:

TO A DEAD DOG

By Henry Sharland

Dead—dog. Dead—dog.
The words are his passing bell.
From the gutter his half-open eyes stare at the sun.
Flies are coming, his mourners.
Dead—dog.
But not more dead
Than Napoleon or Cæsar.
The great can be no more dead than the little.
They are all the same.
I say as I pass,
Hail, Cæsar!
Hail, dead dog!
You too have led armies.
You too have been crowned with laurels.
You are dead, so you too are great.
Cæsar is dead, so he too is little.
And in life he lacked your beautiful thin, curving tail.
Dead—dog.

"Henry!" she cried aloud to an empty room. "Oh, *Henry!*"

The "poem" had been carefully typed on her own beloved typewriter. She stared at it as though it, too, were guilty. Mr. Dawson must

have thought her mad. Oh, what must he have thought? And she could not explain. Explanations were impossible. But it must never, never happen again.

She rushed off, her indignation burning fiercely, with the sheet of paper in her hand. She found Henry lounging by the fire in the library, reading the newspaper.

"How could you?" she cried, thrusting the poem into his hands. "How could you, Henry?"

He looked confused for an instant, then made a gesture with his long arm.

"Oh," he said, "it was quite easy. It was nothing."

"How dared you send up such rubbish under my name?" she demanded.

"I didn't. I sent it up under my own name," he corrected her. She flushed. For a moment she had forgotten.

"You sent it up under a name that I have worked hard to make known," she retorted. "You had no right to do it, Henry. Mr. Dawson must have thought me absolutely crazy. You might ruin my reputation. A joke is a joke, but you must promise me never to do it again."

She saw upon Henry's face a stubborn look that was most unexpected.

"I think it's the best poem I've—we've written. It says something. It gets there. It's got punch."

"Got—what?"

"We belong to different generations and different schools of thought," he informed her. "That's the whole truth of the matter. I am an"—what was that word he had read in the paper a day or two ago?—"an expressionist."

She lost her temper then.

"You're nothing of the sort. You're a practical joker at your mother's expense," she cried, and, bursting into tears, she hurried away to her room again. Henry thought of following her, but tears terrified him, so he went into the kitchen garden instead, where he collected a number of slugs and placed them obligingly on cabbages, for he disliked cabbages. Then he went indoors, and, finding his mother invisible, shut himself in his own room.

By the next day the storm had blown over. He was forgiven, and no further mention was made of "To a Dead Dog." She wrote to Mr. Dawson and told him that the poem had been written as a joke, and that she had never intended it for his eyes, much less for publication. She sent him a few verses called "Faith," which were well received. When the check came she gave it to Henry as usual, but he refused it.

"I don't think I need it," was all he would say.

Henry was by now something of a celebrity in Bridewell, and there was wrought in him an astounding change. He no longer slouched and lounged. He was cleaner and tidier. He was asked out to dinner now and again, and what was yet more unprecedented, he accepted and went. He was even asked to give a short talk on poetry before a meeting of the Village Institute, and only a bad sore throat prevented it. Miss Charlesworth, the doctor's daughter, began to take an interest in him, and for a nice girl to take an interest in him was, his mother knew, the best thing that could happen to him.

One day the postman brought a number of letters and periodicals, some addressed to Mrs. Sharland, some to Henry. She opened those she thought were meant for her—so far she had always been able to distinguish between Henry's private letters, which were very few, and correspondence intended for her under his name.

One of the periodicals she opened was the *Weekly Vanguard,* a "progressive" little paper of extreme views, and, knowing its nature, she wondered who could have sent it to her, and why. She sought for its list of contents, found it, and

then stiffened as she read, "Verses by Henry Sharland." She turned to them with an eager hand and a heart full of dreadful apprehension. There were three. "To a Dead Dog," a poem called "Eggs," and another called "Beginnings." The first one she already knew; the second she thought improper; the third disgusting, as it described, not without the onomatopœic quality to which Henry had once referred, the sensations of a very young male after smoking his first cigar.

The editor of the *Weekly Vanguard* had given Henry a little puff under the heading "Personalia."

Mr. Sharland (he said) is a young man of much promise and considerable fulfillment. He is not unknown to readers of poetry as a writer of "charming" verse. Now, we rejoice to say, he has left the writing of charming verse to the elderly tabbies, male and female, who so industriously flood the world with amiable banalities and pretty, obsolete sentiments. We publish three of his later poems in this issue, and three more will be published next week. Mr. Sharland is not only a virile writer, but a prolific one.

Mrs. Sharland, with feelings it is impossible to describe, took the *Weekly Vanguard* to her own room, and there read Henry's poems over and over till she had them by heart. And over and over

she read the words of the editor. "Virile and prolific!" Was it possible that he was speaking of Henry? Was it possible that he or any one else could read such verses with pleasure? Who was wrong? Who was mad? She and Mr. Moncrieff Dawson, and the people they represented, or Henry and the editor of the *Weekly Vanguard?* And their impossible, incredible followers? She felt that her mind had been shattered by this experience. It presented complications, problems, with which she hardly felt herself capable of dealing. She presently saw that among her letters was one from Mr. Moncrieff Dawson himself, and with an unpleasant foreknowledge of what it would contain, she tore it open. He wrote:

DEAR MRS. SHARLAND,

I must and I do protest. My attention has just been drawn to three of your poems in the *Weekly Vanguard.* You cannot serve God and Mammon, the Good Book says. Well, you seem determined to go over to Mammon. It is very sad and bad, and I cannot help feeling there must be some explanation. I hope so. Which Henry Sharland do you intend to be? You cannot be both.

Which, indeed?

She was convinced, beyond any shadow of doubt, that Henry's poems were bad. But they were Henry's, and they were young. Chiefly they were Henry's. Without a struggle, the first Henry Sharland was about to abdicate. He must go. There was no hesitation in her mind about this. It might be painful—it was painful—but it was right. And because she had come to feel that Mr. Moncrieff Dawson was a friend, she wrote and told him exactly what had happened. Some day, she said, she might write again. A novel, perhaps, under her own name, of course. She thanked him for his help. Then she added as a postscript:

> I want you to know that I am even happier about Henry's poems, bad as they are, than I was about my own.

When Henry heard that his mother had abdicated he took it as evidence, merely, of the superiority of his own work. He was, not unnaturally, elated by his success.

"I can write hundreds like those," he told her. "Hundreds."

She smiled at him, and kissed him.

"You'll soon be famous," she said, as she went out into the garden. She would be able, she thought,

to give more time to the flowers now. And, after all, she had succeeded beyond her wildest hopes. She had meant to give Henry a name. She had given him far more than that; she had given him an occupation, an interest in life. And the world, bless it, had taken to its generous bosom another young poet of the ultramodern school.

Trumpery

Trumpery

IT was the sort of day that inspires tourists to buy gaudily colored post cards and, sitting at marble-topped tables with coffee cups beside their elbows to write:

> Monte Carlo looks just like this to-day. Having a lovely time. Wish you were here. Love to the children.

Monte Carlo did look like that. The sky and sea were of too brutal a blue, the mountains too sharply outlined, the unnatural grass too green, the flowers too crudely bright, the marble and the white paint too dazzling to be "true to life." The whole thing was expensive musical comedy without the music. Even nature had lent itself to the deception. The sea, with no appearance of either life or depth, lay like a painted canvas. The palm trees in the public gardens had forgotten the honest mother sand that bore them. The flowers, pranked out in stiff mosaics within stars, squares, and dia-

monds, might have been laid down by the yard.

A girl came out of the mouth of the Casino and stood undecided on the steps. She saw the crowding blue mountains behind the town as the drop curtain of a stage on which, for a little while, she played the leading part. A Frenchman who looked upon sixty as the prime of life had followed her from the gambling rooms and now stood behind her, brushing some specks of dust from his sleeve, aware of her indecision and rightly connecting it with a consciousness of his presence and a desire for lunch. He had just seen her lose a hundred francs, and although he judged from her appearance that the loss was not of the most serious nature, it was still possible that it might have incommoded her.

She was tall and blue eyed, and her fair hair, untidily arranged, drooped from under a large white hat. Her dress of blue china silk was too thin for April even on the Riviera, and she wore over it a white cloth coat that evoked for him little English scenes connected with bicycling and tennis. Her features were regular, her expression good humored. He saw that she loved pleasure, and that she wished to please and be pleased.

Three minutes later they were walking together toward the Café de Paris.

She had no strong convictions as to the food she

would like to eat or the wine she would like to drink. She begged him to suit himself. What he would like, she said, she would like. He smiled more broadly at this and his eyebrows mounted higher. She thought him very well groomed and told herself that he was certainly a man of the world. Old enough to be her father, possibly, but there was a jaunty, holiday air about him that pleased her. Out of doors he wore his gray overcoat like a cape, buttoned about his shoulders regardless of its dangling sleeves. His gray felt hat, too, was placed slightly on one side of his head. He moved youthfully and briskly. His dark-blue suit was well made and fitted his full figure admirably. Beards, as a rule, she disliked, but his was more like an imperial than an ordinary beard. You could hardly truthfully call it a beard, and it gave a distinguished, pointed look to his round face.

She pulled off her gloves that were of washable suède and smelled innocently of soap, and the interest in his smiling eyes was immediately sharpened. She had beautiful hands. She stretched them out and they were white as milk and her fingers spread prettily, the tips curving back just enough to be agreeable to the eye. She spread those rounded, finely pointed fingers as a peacock spreads his tail. So would she spread them were some one to place a

new ring upon one of them, and she would tilt her fair head this way and that, admiring the effect . . . adorable! Her hands were bare now; no trumpery bit of turquoise set in cheap yellow gold marred their smooth beauty. She should wear a single jewel caught on a thin hoop of platinum . . . a brave, important jewel . . . on the little finger of her right hand. He liked the right hand a shade better than the left.

In his suave, correct English he drew from her replies to his questions. Was it not so that she was abroad for the first time in her life? Come, come, why not be frank with each other? Surely, surely, every one must some day travel abroad for the first time. The first time . . . what a lark, eh? And was she not perhaps too carefully and tediously chaperoned, and had she not escaped to-day just for a taste of freedom . . . a little taste. . . ?

"No, you're wrong," she corrected him. "I'm abroad for the first time, but I'm here alone. I came over as companion to a French girl, but she got married all of a sudden and that left me without a job. I've got enough to get home on and a month's salary, so I thought I'd see life for a bit. I'm staying in diggings here. Are you staying in Monte, too? Oh, Nice! That's quite a

long way off. It's great fun being on your own, my word, it is! Why, I've had adventures enough already to fill a book."

She laughed, and her companion smiled at her and stroked his beard.

"Well, well; and these adventures . . . what were they like? Tell me."

She colored and looked down at her finger nails.

"Oh . . . you wouldn't call them that, I don't suppose, but they might have been. You know . . . a girl has to have some fun. There's a young Swede where I'm staying . . . I called him the Blond Beast at first, but he's as gentle as a lamb now. He eats out of my hand. He's got white eyebrows. And there was Henri . . . the man my friend married . . . yes, even after he was engaged to her he wasn't above trying to carry on with me. Men are . . . well!" She spread out her fingers, looked at them, and then looked up, smiling. "Aren't they?"

"They are very beautiful," he said. "I speak of your hands. Very, very beautiful. Don't you know that?"

"My hands? Are they? Well . . . I thought they were nice as hands go, and I look after them a bit better than most do, but I don't think anything

counts for very much except faces, do you? Faces and figures."

He leaned toward her, still smiling.

"Do not misunderstand me if I say that I like your hands best."

She flushed and dropped them in her lap out of sight.

"Well, I must say, you are . . . !"

"No, no!" he cried. "No, no! Do not hide them, please, please do not."

"All right." She raised them again and rested her chin upon them, self-consciously. "Only I don't understand Frenchmen, and I suppose I never shall."

"Ah." He had fifty smiles, that man, all different. He raised a thin glass in which little points of light shot upward. "To your better understanding of all Frenchmen through knowledge of one."

She, too, raised her glass, boldly.

"And here's hoping that one will be you," she said, and as he bowed she laughed at her own boldness.

Eggs on spinach under a rich cheese sauce followed the *hors d'œuvres*. Veal cooked in cream with truffles followed them both. Then came pale, beautiful asparagus stalks, shading delicately to their green tips, and as she ate them her hands

looked white as lilies and her fingers like the fingers of La Gioconda. The Frenchman's smile was as suave as ever. He read her as easily as he read the wine card and as comprehendingly.

"And in England," he was saying, "in England. What do you do there? You live in the country, you say. I think that in the summer you play tennis with young men. There are perhaps one or two favored ones whom you allow to put their arms about your waist and kiss you, on warm evenings. You like it, but you are a little ashamed. You walk down your lanes, saying very little to each other. You tell no one, except perhaps a girl friend. Am I right?"

"You're simply uncanny!" she cried, putting down her coffee cup. "Uncanny! Well, what else do you know, you . . . you wizard?"

"I think you are a good daughter to a father or mother, I do not know which. Perhaps both. I think you work at something, but I do not know what."

"I ran the typewriting office in our village," she said, "until I got the chance to come here. I've run it since I was seventeen, and done half the typing myself. I'm twenty-five now. Eight years. . . . "

He closed his eyes.

"With those hands . . . !" He opened his eyes again to say, "But all the time you are working, all the time you are playing, you dream dreams, always of a man. Of a strong, older man who will understand and dominate you. Who will make love to you . . . *savamment,* I do not like your word 'knowingly' . . . and whom you would therefore follow to the ends of the earth. He will offer you marriage, and you will say, 'Does that matter when I love you?' But he will not accept your sacrifice, though he has never offered marriage to any woman before. He will marry you. He will revere you all the more for your generosity. You will be exquisitely happy and rich, and have two children, a boy and a girl, in the order that I have named."

Her coffee spoon fell with a clatter.

"Lord! How you do understand! You give me the creeps, I swear you do. How do you know all this?"

"You are a woman," he said, smiling. "Restricted, romantic, young. Our dreams are whatever our lives are not. Tell me your life and I will tell you your dreams."

"But we're not all like me . . . surely we're not all like me?"

He made no answer to that but tilted his head

back and the smoke curled slowly upward from his bearded lips.

"And this afternoon, child, what shall we do, eh?"

Her heart leaped. The afternoon, too!

"Anything you like. I don't care."

"Gamble?"

"No, thanks. I've had enough of that. Oh, I say! There are the Olympic Games on . . . the girls, you know. I'd love to see them."

"The girls . . . yes, we will go. Strong, young female athletes, one day to be mothers. It is like teaching flowers algebra. We will go."

But outside the clouds—vaporous, low, and full of rain—came down over the shoulders of the mountains like wet torn blotting-paper and put out the fire of the sun. In a few seconds the world was gray and streaming and cold, and the palms dripped and sawed their branches, and shiny umbrellas opened everywhere. But as the rain continued even they disappeared, and only the man with the overcoat buttoned about his shoulders like a cape, and the girl in the white coat seemed to have nowhere to go. Then at length they hailed a hooded *fiacre* and crept inside, and it drew them to the top of the public gardens and down a long street beside tram lines, where awnings flapped and

dripped, and pedestrians huddled hopelessly in doorways. Inside the *fiacre* a man's voice spoke quietly, suavely, persuasively.

The cab stopped in front of a jeweler's, and after a little wait the two got out and entered the shop. There, little trays were displayed for them, one after the other, and were banished. But over one tray the man's hand hovered for an instant and then descended. He had made his choice. That was the ring for her finger.

"Put it on."

Off came the glove, smelling of soap. The little finger . . . yes, that was the finger for the ring. He held it lightly. He put the ring on himself as she hesitated. Stepping back, he watched.

Ah, that hand, that divine hand! The fingers all aspray and curving back at the tips, the emerald glowing like distilled summer. She bent her fair head this way and that, cheeks suffused with color, eyes alight . . . adorable! It was exactly as he had hoped it would be, exactly as he had seen it in his mind's eye. He was satisfied.

"The ring is yours, my child. Keep it."

He turned to the jeweler, note case in hand.

How her heart beat! He hadn't even asked the price . . . he must be very rich indeed . . . and what a man! Dominating, eccentric, extraor-

dinary. This was life, life, life! The word drummed in her ears, loudly. Life, life, life! She turned away from the two men. She raised the ring to her mouth and felt it icy against her lips. Her darling ring. Out went her hand again, with the cold green fire flashing upon it. Beautiful! Why had no one ever told her before how lovely her hands were? Each finger was unique, perfect. She felt his touch on her arm.

"Come."

It was still raining heavily, pitilessly. They drove to the Aquarium at Monaco and looked at the wonderful fish. He kept close beside her all the time and never stopped smiling, but he never touched her. There were dark places, too . . . the men she knew at home would have put a hand on her waist or an arm about her shoulders. He knew a great deal about all sorts of sea things, and he talked cleverly. She kept her glove off, and every now and then he said, "Let me see," and she would raise her hand and hold it out for him in the strange green light of some little ocean where beautiful colored fish flickered and turned behind the glass.

The *fiacre* took them to Monte Carlo again. It was still raining. The driver had not been told

where to go, and they were back now, where they had started from. Well . . . what next?

"Á la gare," the man inside called out to him, and he made strange sounds to his horses and cracked his whip.

They took the train to go to Nice just as it was getting dark. They found an empty first-class compartment and sat in corners, facing each other. She had never ridden in a first-class compartment with a man before. She wondered if they would have it to themselves all the way.

There was a great commotion outside . . . laughter, and high, excited voices. People came crowding on to the train just as it was about to start, talking and laughing. Girls . . . they were all girls. What a lot of them . . . dozens . . . all talking in some queer language she didn't understand. Oh, the Olympic Games, of course. They all wore badges. But what were they? Norwegians? Belgians? Swedes?

"Czechs," he told her, and added, smiling, "young athletes."

She nodded.

The train was filling up. The girls came crowding into their compartment. They occupied all the empty seats and still others came and perched on the knees of their friends, laughing and talking all

the time. Everything seemed a joke to them. What high spirits they were in! The games had had to be postponed because of the rain, and still everything was glorious and amusing. She looked at each one of them in turn.

Opposite her sat a plump, fair girl, and a serious, dark, impassive one with a fine throat and a deep voice like the voice of an oracle. When she spoke they all listened. Next to her sat a slender, pretty creature who laughed excessively at everything that was said. She was flushed and helpless with laughter. On her lap sat a younger girl with short hair and a freckled face. A minx, that one. On the other side of the slim, laughing one sat a great Amazon with ropes of reddish hair. A magnificent young woman, but not pretty. In the far corner sat one who seemed to be in a position of authority. She was treated with great affection and little respect. Their talk was as rapid and unintelligible as the talk of birds. What splendid, healthy young creatures! Oblivious to everything and every one but themselves. She glanced at her companion. He sat in his corner with his coat wrapped about him, looking under drooping eyelids at the girls, smiling and amused. They paid not the slightest heed to him or to her. He leaned forward presently and touched her on the knee with his gloves.

"Let me see," he said.

She held up her hand once more, turning it this way and that, spreading out her fingers. The ring flashed and glowed under the dim lamp. In the semi-gloom of the carriage her hand looked paper white.

The girls' clamor increased. One of their companions was passing the open door of the compartment and they seemed to be calling her to come and join them, but she shook her head.

She was dressed in black and under her severe black hat her hair fell in two thick, fair braids. Her profile showed up cameo-like against the black square of the window. What loveliness! The heart of the girl in the white coat was suddenly hushed, and something in her spirit moved its wings as she looked at that serene and perfect face. She was like a new blade first drawn from its scabbard; like young, green wheat; like the silver curve of the new moon at sunset; like scented flowers at night with the dew on them.

A young athlete . . . she gave no heed to her noisy friends but looked out of the window where she could see nothing, and thought her own quiet thoughts; possessed, steady-eyed, and calm. . . .

"Let me see," said the man again, and reached for her hand, but she shook her head and drew

it back. The train rocked and clattered on its way to Nice. The girls talked and laughed. The lovely one standing in the aisle held the rail with both hands and looked out into the night. The Frenchman looked at the girl in the white coat, smiling indulgently at her.

Trumpery . . . that's what she was . . . trumpery. That man smiling at her and watching her like a cat. That bit of green glass on her finger and what it would end in. . . .

How had he known, that man, what she was like? Was it written on her face? Did thoughts, wishes, tendencies write themselves on one's face, so clear that he who ran might read? Or was it just a lucky shot? You couldn't tell, with men.

She looked back. She remembered the young men at home with their encircling arms and their hot hands. She thought of the young Swede. She thought of Henri . . . and the others. A girl had to have some fun. . . . That was what she had always said.

He was still smiling at her . . . he was always smiling . . . but she saw that behind that smile sat a man who bought what he wanted. A good buyer. He knew what he wanted . . . he knew what he could buy, too, and how much he would

have to pay for it. He knew what was trumpery . . . he knew.

The noisy ones called to the girl standing in the aisle, and she turned and smilingly shook her head. Her clear eyes met the eyes of the girl in the white coat and for an instant they lingered there. What years, what miles, what whole countries apart they were; and yet when their eyes met they looked at each other like friends . . . like sisters almost.

She turned away again, and the heart of the girl in the white coat was beating as though she had passed through some strange experience . . . some crisis.

Rocking, the train slowed down and came to a standstill. Lights gleamed outside, reflecting themselves in puddles; bright little lakes that were shattered by the hurrying feet of travelers.

"Villefranche!" shouted the guard. The rain whipped against the windows, and the girls heard it and laughed.

"Let me see," said the man again.

She fumbled with her hands. She slipped the ring off her finger and held it out to him.

"You hold it for me, just for a minute," she said.

She went out into the aisle. The man held the

ring up to the light, turning it this way and that, delighting in its beauty. He had seen many fine emeralds, but never one with a better color than this. Lovely! And on that hand!

"En voiture!" shouted the guard. *"En voiture!"*

The train started with a jerk. Soon it was rocking and clattering on its way. The man looked up and down the aisle. He saw only the girl in black, holding to the rail, and some of her companions. He waited. The girl in the white coat did not come back. She was not coming back. He understood.

He dropped the ring into his pocket, drew his coat about his shoulders, and settled himself more comfortably in his corner. He still smiled.

"Foolish," he said to himself. "And in this rain. Foolish!"

The water ran down the windows, seeped through the cracks, and lay in little pools upon the sills. The girls continued to laugh and chatter. Presently he dozed.

Relativity and Major Rooke

Relativity and Major Rooke

THE mind of a man in love is a curious thing. Moments of exaltation are followed, as often as not, by periods of alarming depression and doubt. A man may be deeply enamored of a woman and still—his habits of bachelorhood or widowerhood or some other less easily definable habit of mind strong upon him—ask himself how he has allowed things to drift so far, and whether or not there is still time to withdraw—honorably, of course—from the battle.

So it was with Major Rooke, forty-five, retired, and living in a small flat in that part of London vaguely designated as Clubland. Here he lived comfortably, surrounded by furniture at which women smiled sadly, and dozens of photographs of nephews and nieces. He was a bachelor less through inclination than through indecision. He had withdrawn—honorably, of course—from several prospective battles, declining to engage with

an enemy whose position seemed to him so very much stronger than his own. For Major Rooke believed he knew himself for what he was—a man of hesitations, and, as he often said of himself, ineptitudes. His doubts, be it known to his credit, were not wholly selfish ones. He had no faith in his own ability to make a woman happy, or, once made happy, to keep her so. Although a man of the most gentle and kindly nature, he was subject to moods of introspection that produced the gloomiest results. He picked himself to pieces then with cruel fingers, and saw that what was left was the veriest trash.

He doubted, at such times, that he had an immortal soul. He was certain that his hair was much thinner than it had been a year ago. He cut a bad figure, especially from the rear, for, in spite of long military service, he had sloping shoulders. He considered his conversational powers contemptible. He was, take him as a whole, a poor creature, without even the external aid of a large income to give him confidence.

And yet a pretty American widow, intellectual withal, had four times dined with him within two weeks, had gone three times to the theater with him, and had allowed him to accompany her on innumerable excursions.

They met in an unconventional way—on the top of a bus, in fact, sitting side by side in one of those seats that are too big for one and not big enough for two. And when the rain came, and all the seats below were taken, he, provident Englishman, was able to hold his good silk umbrella over her pretty hat. Americans, he learned, hated carrying umbrellas. It was a national trait.

"And yet," he shyly volunteered, "you don't mind wearing those rubber overshoe things—galoshes, do you call them?—and our women won't be seen in them."

She laughed, and with a twinkle in her eye suggested that as their American sisters had smaller feet, they dared to take liberties with them, whereupon he said, "Come, come! You ought to have let me say it."

After that it would have been absurd not to go on talking, especially as Heaven provided them just then with a mutual friend, and the opportunity of seeing that friend walking down Knightsbridge.

She was, she owned, a writer. She had come to London to study old houses and doorways, and a well-known magazine was waiting for her articles.

He, he confessed, was nothing at all but a retired

soldier who sat on charitable committees and the rest of the time rusted away at his club.

"But there's no need to rust in London," she cried. "Why, there's just everything here to see and do. The lectures alone would keep me busy; I wish I had time to go to all of them."

He agreed that London afforded ample scope to the studious-minded.

"I think I should like to live here at least half the year," she said. "You don't realize how lucky you are. Of course, I love my own country, but my ancestors came from London, and I feel I can claim it as mine—a little bit of it, anyway." She added, "Besides, it claims me—as a mother might claim a long-lost daughter."

He descended from the bus at Dover Street a charmed man. How quick, how alive, how interesting and interested she was! Dressed, of course, with the miraculous neatness he had grown to expect from her countrywomen. She had gone home with his umbrella, but he had promised to call for it and take tea with her the following afternoon at her hotel. And if any one were to write of the parts that umbrellas have played in love affairs, he would find himself running into many volumes; but no one ever will, because no one ever hears of these things.

She was staying at an unfashionable hotel off Oxford Street, and he felt glad when he went there the next afternoon that she was not of the tribe of rich Americans who choose hotels for their high tariff; forgetting that necessity rather than fastidiousness had doubtless prompted her selection.

Hatless, he thought her prettier than hatted. She wore her thick, fair hair in a small knot, and he saw that she had a wide, serene forehead which helped to make her face intelligent and thoughtful. She had few acquaintances in London, and quite frankly regarded their meeting on the bus as a delightful stroke of fortune.

This story has no plot whatever other than the drama which now began to unfold itself in the mind of Major Rooke; and those who look for sudden surprises and strange coincidences had best leave him and Mrs. Harper to go their own ways.

There is no doubt that from the very first Major Rooke was interested. She was so bright, so alert, so full of enthusiasm. She was, he admitted to himself, what he needed. She was a tonic. She took him to the Tower of London, where he had not been since he was a boy, and made him proud once more of its grim, noble,

bloody, and astounding history—a history, mark you, that she knew, and knew well. She stood beside him silent and reverent in Westminster Abbey, and once, when he looked at her, he saw that there were tears on her lashes. That was in the Poet's Corner, and he was surprised to find how little he remembered it, until he realized with something of a shock that it was fifteen years since he had seen it. The dim loftiness and silence of that perfect building moved him—or perhaps it was her tears that moved him—and he felt proud of his heritage and at the same time very humble because he so seldom thought of it. Again, as they walked along its aisles, speaking in whispers, he had cause to wonder at her knowledge. She was perhaps thirty-five or six, girlish and yet mellow; and to-day her small black hat, blue cloth dress and youthful white collar seemed to him very winning indeed.

She turned large blue eyes upon him, eyes that were full of feeling, and said, "Doesn't it mean—oh, just everything to you, to know that all these things are yours?"

If they hadn't been in Westminster Abbey he believed he would have said, "They mean a great deal to me, but nothing compared to what you might mean to me."

But he felt that it was neither the time nor the place for such a speech, and no sooner were they out of the Abbey and into the present reality of a blowy day with a rain-washed sky and large clouds, than all inclination to say it vanished for the time being. They had presently to cross vast spaces, avoiding traffic, and make their way up Whitehall to the Cenotaph, for it had become his wish and his pleasure that he should be a witness to whatever emotions these and other sights aroused in her.

Later, at her request, they lunched at the Cheshire Cheese. Although he knew it quite well himself, it had not occurred to him as a suitable place to which to take a lady. It seemed a Cityish sort of place, because of the sawdust on the floor, and he had had one of the West End hotels in view; but she scorned such a suggestion. She would sit where Doctor Johnson sat, she would eat as nearly as possible the sort of things Doctor Johnson ate; and so they went, and it was one of their most successful lunches.

All this was very pleasant and very merry, and he discovered that he was surprisingly happy. Then one evil day toward the end of June she asked him to take her to a lecture.

It was a lecture, she said, on the size of the earth,

and on man's span of existence on that earth, in relation to time and space—a subject which interested her enormously.

That lecture, he thought afterward, was, because of its effect on him, one of the outstanding events in his life. He had always thought of himself as a poor thing, but after listening to Professor Brightman for two hours, he saw himself not only in relation to the universe, but in relation to Mrs. Harper, and the sight was devastating.

Some of Professor Brightman's statements must be set down here because of the havoc they wrought in Major Rooke's mind. It must be remembered that his opinion of his own value rose and fell—though it never rose very high—in accordance with his mood, and if Mrs. Harper had properly understood his peculiar temperament she would never have brought him to this lecture.

In an attempt to give his listeners an idea of the length of time man has inhabited this planet, Professor Brightman said that as long ago as fifty thousand years Neanderthal man was burying his dead, as ancient burial places proved.

"Fifty thousand years!" Major Rooke made a mental note of this, and then thought how damnably unfair it was that out of all that time he should be allowed only three-score years and ten, with luck.

And, good God! he had wasted forty-five of them already . . . yes, wasted, except for some years of stiff fighting. Two-thirds of the allotted span gone already. . . .

According to tradition and legend, Professor Brightman continued, man's presence on the earth covered a space of only ten thousand years.

"That's better," thought Major Rooke, with a curious sense of relief.

"But science," the professor pointed out, "proves that man has been here far longer than that. A hundred times longer. Say," he added brightly, "a million years in all."

Major Rooke looked at Mrs. Harper, sitting close beside him with wide, fixed eyes and parted lips, undaunted by the horror of all this. A million years, he was thinking, to make a Major Rooke! Well, evolution, if it had accomplished nothing else, had at least achieved woman as she was to-day. Woman, as typified by Mrs. Harper. Intelligent, companionable and good. Making no wars, hating cruelty and bloodshed, yet forgiving and even loving man, the shedder of blood, even as she forgives and loves the child who breaks things in a temper. Mrs. Harper had spent thirty-five years or so on this earth, inhabited by faulty man for a million years, and had done nothing but good. She had hurt

no one; she had not wasted her time; she had improved and was still improving her mind; she kept her lamp trimmed. She was not, therefore, appalled at what she was hearing, as he was. . . .

He supposed he had heard it all before, but somehow it had never come home to him as it did tonight.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she breathed, aware perhaps that he was looking toward her. "A million years! Think of it."

She smiled at him, and again fixed her eyes on Professor Brightman.

He was now talking about Space. Practically every child knew, he said, that it would take light about 6,000 years to travel across such space as the telescope reveals to us. Both Kelvin and Lodge agreed with this estimate. Now this space which the telescope reveals is, of course, only a part of a whole of we know not how much greater dimension—if, he added with a pleasant smile—if it have dimension at all. He then proposed a little sum by means of which they might estimate the extent of this known space. Light, he told them, travels at about the rate of 186,000 miles per second, a speed that even our best trains, such as the London to Brighton, can scarcely hope to

reach. He got his laugh, and continued. Reduce 6,000 years to seconds, multiply the result—if you can—by 186,000, and you have approximately the number of miles this *known* space is in diameter.

Leaving Major Rooke to struggle with a desire to do the sum in his head and have done with it forever, he passed on to the size of the earth in relation to this same known space.

The earth would, it appeared, occupy a place in it relatively the size of one eight thousand five hundred and fifty-sixth of an inch . . . and our most powerful microscopes could reveal nothing smaller than one ten-thousandth of an inch. . . .

So the earth, Major Rooke gathered, practically didn't exist at all.

Well, he and Mrs. Harper were in the same boat if it came to that, and quite a number of others beside; but what now struck him with tremendous and overwhelming force was not only his personal relation to the universe, which it hurt his mind to think about, but his relation to Mrs. Harper.

To Mrs. Harper, who *liked* these lectures; who fearlessly drank in these facts; who supported herself by her pen; who traveled alone, anywhere; who had helped and finally buried an inventor husband; who never wasted a moment of her life; who got the most out of every fleeting hour—and he had

thought . . . *he* had thought . . . of proposing to her!

He felt completely crushed by Professor Brightman's universe. Effort, in such a world, could be only puny and ridiculous, especially from the most puny and ridiculous of its creatures. Nor could he fail to appear other than puny and ridiculous to Mrs. Harper. What the earth was to space, he was to Mrs. Harper.

She was here to write articles. She was here to see London. He was a convenient male escort —and a safe one. Twenty prosperous and able men, whose relation to the universe was less ridiculous than his own, doubtless awaited her on her own shores.

He relinquished then and there all idea of marrying Mrs. Harper. He could hardly believe that he had ever cherished it. Their friendship was an affair of an umbrella, nothing more, and not even the warm pressure of her hand at parting could now make it for him anything but an affair of an umbrella. He returned to his rooms more confirmed in his bachelorhood than ever, thanks to that vile and interesting lecture which had pulled all the new supports from under his self-esteem, producing a mood that was all the blacker because of the brightness which had so lately preceded it.

That Mrs. Harper was capable of understanding and sympathizing with this depression of his never, of course, occurred to him. There was, he now perceived, a vast gulf between them, and his late friendliness dropped from him because he was certain that she must see him as he saw himself. He even feared that she might frame her opinions of the British male upon her knowledge of him, and his patriotism rebelled against the thought. To offset any such miscarriage of truth, he rang her up after a silence of several days and asked her to lunch with him to meet a friend of his named Dwight Braybourne, who was a famous Oxford Blue, a clever barrister, and a man of manly and attractive qualities.

They lunched expensively at one of the best hotels, for Major Rooke felt that his friend Mr. Braybourne might not appear at his best where the food was inferior or the wine doubtful. The lunch was in most ways a success, and if it failed in any respect, it failed because Mr. Braybourne did all the talking. He talked very well, it is true. He was full of good, gossipy anecdotes. He sketched the characters of famous politicians, and opened for them the doors of the homes of great men.

He began most of his stories with, "As I dare

say you know," assuming that Mrs. Harper went everywhere and knew everybody. On learning that she had never met a writer whose name was a household word on three continents he deplored the fact and said that it should be remedied as soon as possible. She would find that they had, he assured her, so very much in common. Blank was really a most charming fellow, in spite of everything his critics said, and personally there was no one in the world with whom he would rather play golf.

Certainly he exerted himself to please, as seemed to be his habit, but when he had made his neat and well-timed departure it surprised Major Rooke to hear Mrs. Harper breathe a sigh that was like a sigh of relief, and say:

"Now we can listen to each other."

He thought her praise of his friend remarkably faint, and said as much.

"Oh, he's a fine specimen of a man, I grant you," she admitted, "but too . . . too perfect for me. I've no doubt he does everything well. I don't much care about that. But I'm perfectly certain that if you were to ask him to-morrow what color my eyes were, or what my name was, he wouldn't be able to tell you."

He protested that that was unfair. People often

didn't notice the color of eyes, even in faces they knew well, and as for names, they were always elusive.

"You would have known," she said simply.

That afternoon they walked up Piccadilly as far as Hyde Park Corner, then entered the park, and presently sat down where the grass grew long and flowered under the flowering lime trees in Kensington Gardens. But in spite of her flattering attention to the few and trite things he found to say, his self-deprecatory mood still had possession of him. And because she, being a woman and intuitive, felt the distance that his thoughts made between them, she, too, withdrew a little, and talked of impersonal things, looking away from him, and he, noticing this, told himself that he had been quite right to go slow, it was so obvious now that she cared nothing for him.

So, thanks to Professor Brightman's lecture, constraint took the place of their earlier friendliness, and she got up soon, saying that she had work to do. When he put her on the bus at Hyde Park Corner nothing was said of any future meeting, and he walked back to his lonely rooms in one of the blackest moods he had ever known.

Well, that was all over! Obviously, he bored her, and the bore, he told himself, is damned. All

the doubts that he had of himself were a hundred times confirmed. How was he to know that Mrs. Harper, instead of working, went to her room and looked at herself in the mirror, and asked herself how she had failed, and why . . . and cried a little? And equally, how was she to know that a lecture on the relation of the earth to space had caused this friendship which was to her so pleasant and so—yes, so precious—to take a turn for the worse? These subtle changes of thought and feeling are barely understood by us when they take place in ourselves; how then are we to see and understand them when they take place in others?

But women who go to bed pessimists often arise optimists, and Mrs. Harper, after reading *The Times* the next morning, went to the telephone and rang up Major Rooke. After all, there was no real reason to suppose they were less friends than they had been. Nothing had actually happened. And if she had inadvertently hurt him in any way, say by not sufficiently praising his friend—only it had begun, of course, before that—surely it was her duty to make amends for it. For although Mrs. Harper was full of proper pride, she had also a generous heart that would not willingly give little hurts a chance to grow into great ones.

"I wonder," she said, when each had inquired after the health of the other and had agreed that the morning looked promising, "if you would care to take me to another lecture to-night?"

After what seemed to her an appreciable hesitation, during which she questioned the wisdom of what she had done, he replied that he would, most certainly, and asked what the lecture was about.

"It's by Mr. Reeves Smedley," she answered. "He's lecturing on Present-Day Psychology. It's his great subject, you know, and I think it ought to be very interesting."

Major Rooke said that he thought so, too, but there was something in his voice that was both unconvincing and unconvinced. Still, she told herself, if he really hadn't wanted to go, he could have pleaded another engagement, and she wouldn't, of course, have believed him, and that would have ended everything.

She said that as she was going quite near the Philharmonic Hall that morning she would get the tickets herself. This was agreed upon, on the condition that she would consent to dine with him before the lecture.

"We ought to give it every chance," he said. "It's only fair to Mr. Reeves Smedley to dine well

and comfortably before listening to what he has to say."

But although they did indeed dine well and comfortably, it seemed that their first easy comradeship had vanished beyond all hope of recapture. Something, she was now perfectly certain, had happened, but what that something was she had no idea. Nor would her pride allow her to question him, for she would neither show him that she was aware of the change which had taken place, nor risk placing him in a difficult and embarrassing situation, from which he could only extricate himself, perhaps, by lying; and she had already discovered that he was one of the world's most inefficient liars.

So when he asked her what her plans were, she answered that it was time for her to think about going home, at which his heart sank, for so far there had been no mention of her return to America. But he pulled himself together and said that no doubt she was looking forward very much to being in her own country once more; and she was so chilled by this that for some time she could find nothing at all to say, and could only wonder, as she had wondered a hundred times before, how things had managed to go so wrong.

But in the face of his politely distant manner she

found courage to say, "It's been one of the happiest times of my life, this visit to London. It's been all and more than I had hoped."

"Ah, well," he returned, "you've accomplished a great deal, and that must add enormously to the pleasure of it. Your articles are going to be a great success, I'm sure of that."

"I wasn't thinking of my writing at all," she said, but this fell on barren ground, and the next words that he spoke were addressed to the waiter on the subject of fish.

The lecture hall was already full when they arrived, for they had lingered, each hoping for some miracle to take place, over their coffee. They found their seats just as the applause which had greeted the lecturer ceased, and were uncomfortably aware that their entrance had delayed for a moment his opening words.

Upon the platform, where such lighting as there was was concentrated, stood a tall, bearded man, one hand resting in conventional attitude upon a table. Through thick glasses his eyes looked pleasantly upon his audience, and he waited, like an indulgent father, for the small, bustling noises to cease before he spoke.

"I shall now be told," said Major Rooke to himself, "that the mind of man is but one degree

superior to the mind of the anthropoid ape—whatever he is. Why is it they can never tell us anything pleasant about ourselves?"

But he was entirely wrong. There issued from the lips of the lecturer one of the most comforting and heart-warming discourses that Major Rooke, in his low and uncomfortable state of mind, could possibly have imagined. It seemed as though Mr. Reeves Smedley knew that in the fourth row of that hall sat a man whose very soul was parched for just such heavenly dew; and Major Rooke sat and drank it in like a thirsty plant, and with every word his belief in himself returned to him.

Although Mr. Reeves Smedley spoke with great respect and deference of Mr. Darwin, he said that he, personally, had never been convinced that the human mind was necessarily a mere development of the mind of the beast.

He believed, he said, that Science would shortly discover that the mind of man—with all the qualities which make it superior to the beast's mind—is not only higher, but entirely *different,* and by no means a mere growth or development of that appearance of mentality we perceive in the animal.

We were only on the brink, he continued, of

a real knowledge of the mind of man. And he went on to praise that mind and to show the vast complexities of it. As for its possibilities, they were, he believed, unlimited. He thought we were about to witness the dawn of new faculties, hitherto regarded as supernormal. He saw no reason why the so-called astral plane should not little by little penetrate the terrestrial, thereby opening up new worlds for us. If we could only purge man's mind, he said, of mischievous impulses, and instill there instead a belief in its own power and in its own great destiny, to what sublime heights might it not rise?

And after leading them from hope to hope for a fleeting two hours, he smiled, as if smiling to himself, and with one hand grasping his short beard, said:

"Two weeks ago, I myself sat where you are now sitting, and listened to a brilliant talk by one of our greatest scholars on the size of the earth in relation to space. In many lay minds that lecture, convincing and enthralling as it was, must have brought about a state bordering on mental paralysis, for it showed with cruel clearness the microscopic littleness of our earth and of ourselves. 'We,' many of you must have said, 'are of less consequence than the louse that lives upon the louse that lives

upon the louse that lives in the ear of a fieldmouse.' But what I want to impress upon you to-night is this:

"Where the scale is so great, differences of size cease to exist, because we are trying to measure them with the immeasurable. And now let me quote William James to you in one of the most magnificent passages he ever wrote for the comfort and enlightenment of mankind."

He leaned forward and pointed a finger straight at Major Rooke.

" 'So long,' says William James, 'as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the *symbols* of reality, but as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena, as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term.' "

The gentleman who had introduced Mr. Reeves Smedley now rose to his feet in the midst of the applause that the lecturer received and so well deserved, and made a short speech of appreciation and thanks. But all the time he was speaking Major Rooke was saying to himself:

"Private and personal phenomena . . . private and personal phenomena . . . My God! Why have I never heard that before?"

He had been trying to measure himself with the

immeasurable, and Mrs. Harper was immeasurable. Perhaps he himself was immeasurable . . . Differences cease to exist! . . .

He heard her murmur, as if to herself:

"Oh, he gives one new faith in oneself."

So she, too, had been in need of that!

His heart warmed and expanded, and something wholly new entered into it. His hand, seemingly of its own volition, dropped to the seat beside him and encountered there the small, warm hand of Mrs. Harper—and closed on it. Private and personal phenomena indeed! . . . And her hand twisted in his and opened, and their fingers locked, and as that private and personal phenomenon took place their faces turned slowly toward each other, and in the semi-darkness their eyes met, and Major Rooke dealt with realities in the completest sense of the term.

His lips moved, very slightly, but they formed the word, "dearest," and her lips moved, and they formed the same word, and heaven with its vast, with its infinite spaces opened for Major Rooke, and he no longer felt little, for he was unafraid.

To the Satisfaction of All

To the Satisfaction of All

THE two women sat over their chocolate cups, smoking and talking, and through the upstairs windows of the Bond Street *confiserie* came the unmistakable sounds of a spring morning. There was, for instance, an increased and heightened pitch in the sound of the traffic, as if the world had suddenly become hollower and wider, voices took on a lighter and more penetrating quality, an organ played with sweet and urban gayety in a side street, sparrows chirped with even greater optimism, and the air on which these sounds were borne in to them came in soft, languorous puffs, with no more malice in it than in the breath of a sleeping child.

The two women were not unmoved by all this. Their thoughts turned to travel, to beauty spots they knew.

"Think of the Italian Lakes in a week or two."

"Or Perugia, or Florence. Darling Florence."

"Yes. Vallombrosa, with the trees just turning green."

"Or the Riviera, and hot sun, and anemones in the grass under the olive trees."

"Wouldn't it be too late for the Riviera?"

"Too late? It's just the best time, with the crowd gone, or going."

"Could we go? Oh! couldn't we?"

"Well . . . why not? What's to prevent us?"

"Just you and I?"

"Yes, if you like. It would be lovely."

"Or you and I, and . . . Philip, perhaps. But I suppose if we had Philip we'd have to have another man."

Leora Wendover shook her head.

"I don't think that would do at all. I think it must be just you and I, or you and Philip and I. I suppose its old-fashioned of me, but I should hate the idea of a foursome. I'll gladly chaperon you and Philip though."

"But wouldn't it bore you?" her friend asked. "You know how it is with . . ."

"With you and Philip? My dear, do I not? But, seriously, Denise, what would William say, and think? Do you think it would be wise?"

"Wise? What do I care? I've been wise all my life, and I'm bored to death with it. You know what William is. Here I've been falling in love

with Philip quite openly for weeks, months, and he's never even troubled to notice it. Well, if he doesn't worry, why should I?"

"Oh, well, you know William *doesn't* notice things, and the thought that you . . . it would never enter his head. All the same, I hardly think he'll like your going abroad with this devoted young man."

"He won't mind. He's always asking Philip to stay, he talks to him by the hour. He likes him. Oh, I'm fond of William, I don't want to hurt him, but I realize now that I've never felt more than fondness for him. Philip is like my other self. You don't *know* what he is. I'm wildly in love, and for the first time in my life."

Her friend's intense and tragic looks touched Leora.

"It's the spring, of course, partly," she said, looking out of the window at the strip of pale-blue sky that was Bond Street's share of heaven. "But I do sympathize, I assure you. It's doubly painful at our age. I want to get away, too. It's just two years since *it* happened, and that makes London almost unbearable to me."

"Oh, I know, my poor darling!" cried Denise. "Then let's go. Let's go. I'll write to Philip tonight."

Leora pulled on her gloves. Her mind was suddenly made up.

"We'll motor," she said. "Would you like that? I'll send the Daimler to Paris, and we'll meet it there, and motor by easy stages to Cannes, or somewhere along the Riviera. I feel I want plenty of hot sun. We'll go by Auxerre and Bourg and Dijon, and then we'll go east a little and stop at Aix. I love Aix, and I haven't seen it for years. Then we can go through Arles, and Nîmes, and then to Marseilles and along the coast. Do you think you'd like that?"

"Would I like it? Oh, Leora, it would be heaven!"

Denise Radclyffe's eyes filled with tears. She was an emotional, impulsive woman, and she was suddenly made so exquisitely happy by the prospect of these delights that she wanted to cry. She was the wife of William Sutton Radclyffe, for twenty years Member of Parliament, and once Air Minister. She was, every one who knew her agreed, very nearly a beauty, and, in addition to that, she was never known to let another woman down, was extremely generous in the matter of loans to the temporarily inconvenienced, and was very much liked by both sexes. It was quite true that she had never before been in love, in spite of the fact that

she had many admirers. She had prayed for it and dreaded it, and now that it had come to her she lived an intense and emotional inner life which she confided to no one but Leora.

But with Denise, things had to go either backwards or forwards. She hated hole-and-corner affairs. And she was now faced with the problem of problems. She must either leave William or give up Philip. She had to act. She implored Leora's advice. Again and again she flung questions at her, tragically.

"Well, you see how it is. What am I to do? I can't go on like this. I won't. I hate deceptions. What shall I do?"

Leora felt that to advise her was impossible. She could only say, "Wait, wait," but she was perfectly aware that this was futile and unhelpful. She hardly knew Philip, and she was glad of the opportunity the trip offered to know him better.

She was Leora Kingsley before her marriage, the daughter of wealthy American parents. She had married Lord Wendover, and had been perfectly happy with him for eight years—until his death two years ago, in a London nursing home as the result of a hunting accident.

She was a graceful and unusually attractive

woman, and while she had not enough beauty to arouse the envy of other women, she was, partly because of her reserve and aloofness, extremely interesting and puzzling to men.

The two women, neither of them very young—they were nearing forty—were very fond of each other, and nothing had ever happened to mar, in the slightest degree, the placidity of their friendship.

William was told all the details of the trip. They were going to Paris for a few days' shopping, and Philip Lestrange was going to meet them there— "It's better that we should have a man with us, don't you think so, William?"—and they would then motor, taking several days, to Antibes, where a friend of Leora's had lent them her villa for a month.

The thought of late April and early May on the Riviera with Philip filled Denise with ecstasies. Did Leora think there would be nightingales? Leora did not. She believed the Frenchmen shot them all and made soup of them. Denise perceived that Leora meant to throw cold water on all her romantic yearnings, and smiled affectionately.

Leora gave her only one piece of advice.

"Don't throw yourself into his arms," she said,

"however much you may want to. I've no doubt he's madly in love, but go slow. Make sure that you really want to smash up William's happiness. Remember, you *must* make sure."

Leora had her own problem—less complex, certainly—and she asked no one's advice. Stuart Rivers, American Naval Attaché in London, wanted to marry her. She liked him very well, but loved him only a little, she thought, which meant that she could just endure the thought of marrying him. Having had the best, wouldn't she be foolish to take second best? Or, having had the best, wasn't she foolish not to be content, the second time, with second best? She disliked living alone. A widow, a rich American, and the widow of a peer, she was bothered a good deal by people in one way and another. She felt she wanted companionship and protection.

A maid took the heavier luggage by train from Paris, and the two women, suitably and charmingly dressed for motoring, called for Philip at the Crillon at nine o'clock on a Sunday morning. The chestnut trees were dotted all over with small, unfolding green fans, the atmosphere of Paris was clear and limpid, the rays of the sun were flashed back at them from a million bright surfaces, and in the soft and lazy air was the smell

of sap and earth and baking bread and petrol. Philip was ready and waiting and came out to the car at once. He looked, Leora thought, like a sort of urban deity; the metropolitan god of spring. His skin, in the morning sun, looked delightfully fresh; his vital-looking brown hair grew close to his head and had burnished threads in it. His gray flannel suit and light overcoat were perfect. He was probably several years younger than they were, she guessed. A man, and younger. It wasn't fair.

"Poor Denise, I can quite understand," she said to herself.

"Do you mind if I sit in the middle?" Denise asked her. "Then I can talk to both of you."

Leora made room at once. She understood then that for the entire journey Denise would wish to sit between her and Philip. She had no intention of making any objection; it suited her perfectly. She didn't in the least want to talk to Philip; she never cared about talking much in a motor. One missed things one ought to see; and who wants to talk for hours on end, anyway?

They sped away from Paris towards Fontainebleau and Melun. The forests were at their loveliest. The trees had their feet in exotic-looking grass, and their heads in pale-green gauze.

Sometimes Leora heard what the other two were saying, and sometimes the wind carried their voices away, but during the first day, as they flew along the interminable poplar-lined roads that rushed away before and behind to mere pin points of distance, she heard enough to know that Denise was dangerously happy and in love, and that Philip was either equally in love or was an experienced actor. They talked about everything and every one. Leora wondered if they weren't, perhaps, using themselves up too fast. She wanted to say:

"Remember, there's to-morrow and the next day and the next, and plenty of days after that." But it was none of her business, she supposed.

Denise often raised her voice and included her in their talk. In fact, she included her more often than Leora wished.

"Isn't that so, Leora? Why are you so quiet, darling? What are you thinking about?"

And Philip often leaned forward and spoke, or merely smiled to her. His look seemed to say:

"If I had my way, I'd be sitting between you two charming women."

She knew nothing of Philip beyond what Denise had told her, but she guessed a good deal. He had about three thousand pounds a year, fastidious tastes, many friends, undeniable attractions, and

a brain that was ready to answer to far more demands than were ever put upon it. He had done extremely well in the war, and had done very little since. Every unmarried girl hoped to marry him, and numerous married women cultivated him with less honorable intentions. He was discreet and adroit. His blue eyes were very clear and bright, his nose was fine, his mouth and chin—the former shaded by a small mustache—were admirable. His figure was beautifully proportioned and full of vigor. Leora told herself that he was too much "the maiden's dream," but for all that it was foolish to underrate his attractions, chief of which was his agreeable masculinity.

When they stopped for lunch at Auxerre, Leora left the others sitting over their coffee and liqueurs and went to look at the cathedral. She was so delighted with it that she ran back to fetch them. Philip came with alacrity; Denise, a bad sightseer, less eagerly. Philip admired the beauties of the church at Leora's side, while Denise wandered about alone, keeping at a little distance from them. She wanted Leora to know and like Philip, and Philip to know and like Leora . . . but not too much. She thought they made a very attractive couple as they stood looking up at the glories of the stained

glass. Leora was tall and slender, with a small head and a long throat, and a slender, lithe body. Denise was shorter and rounder, with more pronounced curves. She wondered, as she looked at Leora with Philip, if she were not the sort of woman men must inevitably prefer, and felt a sharp dissatisfaction with herself. She presently left the church and went out into the sunlight. Then she strolled back to the hotel. When the others returned they found her sitting in the car, waiting for them; and Leora, for some reason, felt a little guilty, as if she had been thoughtless.

They dined at Bourg, and decided to push on to Aix that night, and arrived at eleven, after a run of three hundred and fifty miles, feeling tired and yet exhilarated. The next morning Leora looked out of her window and saw the forget-me-not blue lake lying in the lap of amethystine mountains from whose tops clouds were just drifting away. She dressed quickly and went into the garden, which was built out, terrace fashion, on the side of a slope, and there walked under a roof of clipped lime trees planted so close together that their branches intermingled and made a continuous mesh between her and the sky. Through the little pillar-like trunks she saw the lake again. Then she saw that Denise and Philip were ahead of her, and were standing

looking out over the low balcony that bounded the terrace. They believed themselves to be alone and unobserved. She saw Denise move nearer to Philip and ask him something, at the same time covering one of his hands, which rested on the balcony, with hers. Leora saw that there was a second's hesitation, a second's indecision on Philip's part before he bent his head and kissed her. She turned quickly away and went into the hotel. She thought it foolish of Denise to expect to be kissed so early in the morning; foolish, anyway, to ask for it. If an early kiss comes one's way, well and good, but one doesn't ask for it if one is wise. . . .

Presently, after revisiting some places she remembered, Leora suggested that they go on, and the others readily agreed. It seemed a pity to leave that heaven, but the villa waited. Again Denise sat in the middle and talked most of the time to Philip. Once she turned affectionately to Leora, and said:

"Leora, darling, you're the most perfect traveling companion in the world. You're the only woman I would dream of going with on a trip like this."

Leora, turning her head to answer, caught Philip's eye. There was a humorous and slightly sardonic gleam in it, she thought, but she made no response

to it, and only pressed Denise's hand. She was quite happy. She wanted nothing but peace, and the smooth motion. They spent a night at Avignon, and Leora observed that Philip knew more about the palace of the popes and the Roman remains than his debonair and young-man-of-fashion appearance suggested. They covered the seventy-five miles to Marseilles late that afternoon and spent the night there. The next morning they followed the road along the coast to Antibes.

As they wound their way through the aromatic countryside, with the red rocks and purple-blue of the Mediterranean dazzling their eyes, Leora thought they had been very wise to come. It was good to be in the South again and to see the dark-eyed country people and the bougainvillea, and the flat, bright coloring, and the little towns crowning the hilltops. Denise, who cared little for the interiors of churches, was very susceptible to scenery, and was now overflowing with happiness. She was at last living a romance; this *was* romance; and William seemed very far away.

At four they reached the villa. It stood on a point of land running out into a small bay, and was surrounded with umbrella pines which turned their rounded green tops toward the sea all at the same angle—an angle determined by the winds.

But underneath their odorous shade there was no wind, even when the mistral blew. The villa was white with a red roof and blue-green shutters, and around it flower beds were laid out in stiff and prosaic French fashion. The wide porches looked out over the sea, the sun filtered through closed shutters into the rooms, and to the three travelers from London it seemed like heaven on earth. They had tea on the terrace, and their sense of well-being was indescribable. Everything delighted them; the rolls in dazzling white napkins, the butter in little brown jars, the steady sun, the cool shadows under the pines, and the friendly, enameled blue of the sky. To the right of the villa was a small orchard of orange and lemon trees, and they presently walked there, to make certain of the reality of those bright globes among the leaves.

After dinner that evening Leora took up a book, and Denise said to Philip:

"There's a moon, and I want to see it shining on the water. And perhaps we'll hear a nightingale."

Philip looked at Leora.

"You'll come, too, won't you?"

But she assured him she was much too tired to care about the moon, and they went without her, but at the door Philip looked back at her regretfully. When they came in an hour later, she thought

he looked as if he were not in the best of tempers.

The next day they motored to Monte Carlo, and once more Denise sat in the middle. On the way back, however, Philip rebelled.

"I don't see why you should never have the corner seat, Denise," he said, and in spite of her protesting that she didn't care about it, he got in before her and sat next to Leora. Now that he was between them the talk was more general, but, if anything, he talked more to Leora than to Denise. Leora felt that he thought they had been neglecting her, and she wished to disabuse his mind of any such idea. He was there because Denise had wanted him, not because she had; and her only wish was that Denise should be as happy as possible.

As the days went on, Denise showed a tendency to monopolize Philip more and more, and Philip showed an increasing reluctance—which only Leora saw—to be monopolized. She couldn't fail to observe his regretful glances when they left her behind, or his anxiety that she should not be allowed to excuse herself from joining them. Nor could she fail to understand that when Philip sat between them in the car it was not purely because of a chivalrous wish that Denise should have a comfortable corner seat.

All this began to cause her considerable anxiety.

It is not easy to say to a woman who is deeply in love and who imagines herself deeply loved:

"Don't expect him to be alone with you so much. He is becoming bored."

And that is what she would have had to say to Denise; and good friends though they were, she could neither say it nor hint it without destroying her happiness.

Sometimes the two women went to Cannes to shop, leaving Philip behind, and they enjoyed these excursions and talked and laughed with their old gayety. Denise said she couldn't express her gratitude. All this happiness came from Leora; she had made the trip possible; it was she who had provided the car, and it was through her that they had been lent the villa.

"And you've given me this wonderful chance to make sure that Philip is worth going through anything and everything for, and that I really do want to spend the rest of my life with him."

"Well, make absolutely certain of that before you commit yourself in any way," Leora urged with a sinking heart. Couldn't Denise *see* . . . ?

The next afternoon, Denise, who had been sitting on the rocks in the sun all the morning talking to Philip, went to her room at about three with a violent headache. Leora did what she could for her—

gave her aspirin, drew the shutters, and made her lie down. She then went out on the terrace with a book, but she had not been there long when Philip appeared. She thought he looked harassed and a trifle pale, and she wondered if the sun had, perhaps, been too much for him too.

"Come for a walk," he said in a low voice. "Please. I want to talk to you."

They were just under Denise's window, and knowing that their voices would disturb her and perhaps prevent her sleeping, Leora got up at once, and, putting on a shady hat, went with him into the garden. They talked in the most desultory way, and Leora stooped to pick some anemones which grew in the grass under the trees. If Philip had anything of importance to say, he evidently found the saying of it too difficult. She thought she knew what he wanted to talk about, but loyalty to her friend demanded that she know and say nothing of it; it was impossible for her to help him.

She now realized—not for the first time, but more fully—what extraordinary charm Philip had. His blue eyes were eloquent with unspoken things, and she tried to avoid meeting them for fear her own might respond. She felt as if she and Philip shared a secret—a secret from which Denise was entirely excluded; that they understood each other

perfectly; that it didn't matter whether they talked of this secret or not. There it was . . . a common understanding, a common knowledge. How it had come about she could hardly have said. She only knew that it made her feel unutterably disloyal. She felt that Philip assumed, and rightly, that she saw everything. He also assumed, and again rightly, that she knew he knew she saw, and this awful understanding seemed to encompass them, and draw them close, and make them companions in guilt. It was the first time they had ever been alone together, and yet she knew that she had been keenly aware of him and of his thoughts and feelings ever since they had left Paris, and that without ever having talked to him except in Denise's company, she knew him as Denise would never know him. These things were so patent to both of them that it was unnecessary and at the moment impossible to speak of them. Their present sense of release and satisfaction in each other's company was so astonishing to Leora that she had to try to find analogies or similes for it. It was as if, she thought, she and Philip were the two ends of a piece of elastic which had been stretched apart by some force and kept apart, and had now, the tension being removed, snapped back into place again. An absurd example, she told herself, but it *felt* like that.

Presently they left the garden and walked along the road. They refrained from talking of themselves, of each other, or of Denise. Most of all of Denise. But underneath their talk of books, of people, of places, she divined his restlessness and anxiety. She felt, too, as if Denise walked with them all the way. Once a motor passed close to them, and Philip put his hand on her arm to draw her nearer to the side of the road. He continued to hold her arm, and it was some moments before she could find the determination to release it. She said they had walked far enough and turned toward the villa again. She walked quickly, fearful that he might even yet say something that she preferred not to hear; and when they reached the terrace she looked up and saw that Denise was watching for them from the window.

"I'm coming up," she called, and hurried into the house to Denise's room.

"How do you feel?" she asked. "Better?"

Denise said she felt much better, and that she intended to dress and come down for tea.

"I woke up," she said, "and the house seemed so quiet I felt sure you had gone out. What did you talk about? Did you talk about me?"

"Not a word," Leora told her.

"Of course you didn't. I was joking. What did you talk about?"

"Oh, different things—books, New York, people, Monte Carlo. . . ."

"I'm glad you had a talk. Leora, what *am* I going to do? I am more hopelessly in love with him than ever. I utterly adore him, and I know I can't live without him. I can't go on and on like this. What shall I do?"

Denise began to brush her dark, wavy hair. Her face was flushed from her sleep, and Leora thought she had never seen her looking younger or lovelier.

"Philip's getting impatient, too," she went on. "I can feel it. It's a terribly difficult position for him, poor darling. I know how he hates these concealments . . . as much as I do. Shall I write to William, and tell him everything? That Philip and I have fallen hopelessly in love, and that I want to be free? I know he won't want me to stay when he realizes that. Or would that be a brutal way of doing it? Hadn't I better wait till I get home?"

For a moment Leora made no reply. Then she said, "Denise, you know I like Philip, but somehow . . . somehow I can't see him as a husband."

Denise turned quickly and looked at her.

"Do you mean as a husband for me, or just as a husband?"

"As a husband to anybody."

Denise looked utterly amazed.

"How extraordinary that you should say that. I can't understand it. To me, Philip is precisely what a husband ought to be, and that is, *not* too much like one. William began to be like a husband almost before I married him. There's nothing more boring."

Leora saw that Denise would listen to no criticism of Philip, and that it was useless for her to continue. Useless and dangerous.

"It's only that I am so anxious to see you happy, Denise," she said. "And also that I'm fond of William."

It was in Denise's mind to say, "It's a pity you're not married to him, then," but she disliked sharp retorts, and she knew, too, that Leora was sincerely anxious to help her. The two women presently went downstairs arm in arm, but with widely diverging thoughts. Denise, subconsciously aware, perhaps, of the real cause of Philip's restlessness, but refusing to admit it fully to her mind as one tries to ward off any unbearable pain, longed to burn her own and his bridges, and to set about it speedily. Leora, seeing the reverse side of the picture, anticipated in such a procedure nothing but disaster of the worst sort, but felt as impotent as a shadow to avert it.

After all, she *knew* nothing of Philip's feelings; she only guessed; and, being human, she was possibly in error. And what right had she, after all, to interfere in a matter of such enormous and vital importance in her friend's life?

They went to Monte Carlo the next day, and as it rained steadily from low and vaporous clouds, they went to the Casino and gambled. Denise was unlucky, and her losses impaired her temper, but she persisted doggedly. Leora, drifting from one table to another, played as her fancy dictated, and won. Philip, feeling in anything but a winning mood, did not play at all, but stood behind one or the other of the two women, or wandered about the rooms with a look of frowning boredom.

After two hours of this, Denise decided that she had had enough, and feeling in need of consolation, looked for Philip. She saw no sign of him or of Leora. A feeling of utter loneliness and depression seized her with quite unaccountable force, and it seemed to her that she was unfortunate, deserted, and miserable. Why wasn't Philip near at hand? Where had he gone? He preferred being with Leora, perhaps. She thought she had noticed in him of late a decided partiality for the company of her friend. She now longed to find them, but feared to find them together, and went from room to room,

like a dog searching for its master. In the last room of all she discovered them. Leora was playing at a small table where there was no crowd pressing round, and Philip stood behind her, watching. Denise was stabbed with such a pain that she dared not approach immediately, but stood at a little distance, trying to control and calm herself. In that moment she felt a deep distrust of Leora. She was exerting her charms to attract Philip, and to attach him to herself. Wasn't there a woman in the world, then, whom one could trust?

On a tide of anger she went to them and, ignoring Philip, she bent down and said in Leora's ear:

"I'm going out of this vile place. You'll find me near the door or on the steps when you've finished."

She walked swiftly away, and Leora turned and met Philip's eyes. She had thought nothing of his presence there at her side. Absorbed in her play she had hardly been aware of him, but she now felt, as before, that they were partners in a conspiracy, and equally guilty.

"Go after her," she said. "Quickly. I'll join you outside as soon as I can get my counters changed."

Philip hurried to overtake Denise, and was at her side before she had more than crossed the room.

"I'm coming, too," he said.

She felt immediately soothed and mollified, but not wishing to seem too quickly appeased she walked on through the crowd without speaking to him. She saw how the women they passed followed Philip with their eyes. Women always looked at him, everywhere, but among the misshapen, colorless, and sub-human beings who, for the most part, fill the Casino, he looked like an inhabitant of another planet. When they got outside and found the sun shining and the rain just over, she felt better. Her bad temper, she realized, was partly caused by her losses, and of her feelings toward Leora she was already bitterly ashamed.

"The air of that place," she said, "makes me feel not only ill, but wicked as well."

Philip, lighting a cigarette, replied that he thought half an hour enough for anybody.

"I've learned from long experience," he said, "that it's no good trying to force your luck at roulette. Give it up and try another day. It's a game you need to play casually."

As they stood there, taking long breaths of the fresh, clean air, a woman approached and was about to enter the Casino when she caught sight of Philip. He bowed and took off his hat, and she stopped and spoke to him. She was wonderfully dressed, with that accomplished neatness and dash, and that

perfection of telling detail that seems the gift of the Parisian and the Viennese. They talked in French, and she looked up into Philip's face smiling delightedly. She sent one quick glance in Denise's direction, and Denise knew that in that rapid survey she had been snapshotted from her hat to her feet. She carried an ugly little griffon under her arm, and as she talked she stroked it lovingly. When she had gone an amused smile still lingered on Philip's face.

"Who was that?" asked Denise.

"She's a Madame Maury," he said. "An Austrian by birth. I haven't seen her for years. She's a most entertaining little creature, and they used to say she had the most perfect figure in Vienna. She's only twenty-seven, and she's been married three times."

"How revolting," Denise remarked. It seemed to her, in her sensitive state, that the world teemed with attractive and dangerous women, all of whom threatened her happiness.

"She's a type," Philip said, smiling, "but distinctly amusing."

Then Leora came out, stuffing some money into her bag.

"I've won eleven pounds," she said, "but I'd gladly pay it rather than go there again. I feel I shall never get that air out of my lungs."

They had tea at one of the hotels, and then motored home. Leora insisted that Denise sit in the middle, and she pretended to be sleepy, and sat with her eyes closed a good part of the way. She knew quite well what Denise was suffering, and pitied her. As for Denise, the day, to her, had been disturbing and unsatisfactory. She wondered why she wasn't happier. Was it her fault, or Philip's? It wasn't, she was certain, Leora's, though Leora might be an unconscious tributary cause. She didn't doubt Philip's love. She simply couldn't face the thought that he loved her less. She put it resolutely out of her mind again and again. There were so many happy incidents in the past, so many tender and loving acts of his to remember, all of which proved the genuine and lasting quality of his love. And if he seemed . . . different, she told herself that men had moods as well as women. The waiting, the uncertainty irked him, she felt sure. Still, if he were impatient and tired of waiting, he ought to tell her. She had been puzzled lately by his unwillingness to talk about the future.

When she woke the next morning she felt bitterly ashamed of her behavior of the day before. She had injured Leora in her thoughts, and Philip, too. She had let them see that she was jealous. She had acted like a child, and she wanted to make amends.

As soon as she had breakfasted she went into Leora's room.

"Leora, will you amuse Philip this afternoon?" she said. "I simply must go to Cannes and see that old aunt of William's. It's disgraceful that I haven't been before. I'll go after lunch, and get back between five and six."

"Oh, poor Denise," said Leora from her bed. "But I suppose you must go. I don't see why I shouldn't come, too, though. Philip is quite capable of amusing himself for an afternoon."

"No," Denise said firmly. "He'd like you to stay, I know. And so would I. Do, Leora, to please me."

Leora saw that Denise was ashamed of her jealousy and wished to wipe all memory of it from their minds. She kissed her hand to her and said:

"Exactly as you please, my dear. I don't in the least mind which I do."

But all the morning, between her and Philip, there ran a sort of electric current of anticipation and suspense.

When Denise had gone, Philip offered to give Leora an hour's practice at tennis. The court was badly kept and weedy, but sufficed for this purpose. He sent balls to her, and she returned them as hard as she could from the back line. They soon tired

of this, however, and Leora then suggested that they sit on the terrace in the sun, as it was cold in the shade. Philip fetched a rug and a parasol, sent for orangeade and a whiskey and soda, brought books, and made her comfortable in a long chair, and himself comfortable in another long chair close beside her.

"How extremely pleasant this is," he said, tilting his soft hat over his eyes and regarding her from the shadow of its brim.

"It's delicious," Leora agreed. "I wish Denise hadn't had to go to Cannes. It's a pity ever to leave this villa, I think."

At the mention of Denise's name he fell silent, and she knew of what he was thinking as well as if he had told her. Suddenly he put a hand on the arm of her chair.

"Tell me," he said. "Is there any way of avoiding that rocky and difficult passage by which a man has to lead a woman from love back to friendship?"

His question seemed to twitch every nerve in Leora's body. Denise's agony, which was to come, was for the moment hers, vicariously, and she suffered vicariously. She knew well enough that when a man talks about friendship after love he means escape. She turned toward him, and while her face was tragic, his was only bitter.

"Do you mean to do that to Denise?" she asked in a low voice.

"You know I do," he answered. "I must. What else can I do?"

What else indeed? He had been in love with Denise. He was so no longer. Starkly, there it was. And she had known it for days.

Sick at heart, she answered:

"It would be no good to Denise, that rocky passage of yours. It's only an ugly and painful farce. It would be better to sink the ship where it is. Make it a total loss. It's decenter, and kinder. Or else . . . go on."

He pulled his hat further over his eyes.

"I've tried going on. It's impossible. I don't know why I should tell you this. You know it. You've seen it."

How had he known that she had seen? They had said nothing. Was it in her eyes? Then she had different eyes for him than for Denise. Knowing herself to be guiltless, she yet felt her guilt. And when had Philip first known he couldn't go on? Only since leaving Paris?

"It's horrible!" she cried. "Horrible! Even to discuss it with you makes me feel disloyal. What can I do? Don't you realize you are going to make her suffer? How can you do it?"

He said again:

"What can I do? I can't give what doesn't exist. I've been going through hell for days. Don't, for Heaven's sake, imagine that this is going to be easy or pleasant for me."

"I don't care," Leora said, "what it is for you. I'm thinking of her."

"And if I weren't thinking of her," he persisted, "wouldn't it be perfectly easy for me?"

She nodded.

"Yes, I didn't mean to be unkind. But"—it was no good, she had to find out—"when did you first discover that you—couldn't go on? If it was before we started on this trip, why did you come?"

He made no attempt to avoid her eyes—eyes in which he was acute enough to observe both a desire to learn the truth and a dread of hearing it. But he was a man who knew there was a right and a wrong moment for all things, so he only said, quietly:

"It wasn't before."

Further than that in her questioning she couldn't go. A strained silence fell between them, which Leora seemed to have no inclination to break.

"To send myself a telegram and go," Philip went on presently, "seems to me only to postpone the inevitable."

Leora shuddered.

"No, don't do that. It would be cowardly, and horrible."

"I'm afraid there is really no pleasant way of hurting people," he reminded her. "I must find the one which will cause her the least pain."

"I always thank God," Leora exclaimed, "that women can and do make men suffer too."

"Let's not generalize about the sexes," he said, smiling. "When men and women deal unkindnesses to one another, it's generally because of the excessive kindness they feel toward some one else. The balance is kept in that way, perhaps."

Leora made an impatient movement.

"If we could only cease to care for people at will, by merely touching a spring," she said.

"Very few would touch it," he concluded for her. "Denise wouldn't, for one."

Leora feared that there he was perfectly right, but she had no intention of telling him so. Denise was not a woman of variable feelings. She didn't love easily or lightly, and she would rather suffer than let go. Leora found the whole problem distressing and incredibly difficult. But one thing was clear to her. He must be honest with Denise and let her know the truth as gently as possible at the earliest possible moment. She might, for all they

knew, write that letter to William, although Leora thought she was unlikely to do so without consulting her.

Philip got out of his chair and stood over her, looking down.

"I suppose," he said, "I appear in your eyes an absolute cad, and a brute." He added, "I suppose you can't understand how this has happened; how it can happen to a man, almost against his will."

His magnetic blue eyes held Leora's; his look disquieted her.

"You're wrong," she said. "I can understand, of course. I could even forgive if I felt absolutely sure that you were sincere in the beginning, and that you didn't simply allow yourself to drift into this because you were certain of being able to extricate yourself in time."

"That," he said, "I swear is not true. I swear it."

"Then," she replied, "I suppose even Denise might forgive you in time."

He took her hand and kissed it.

"Thank you for that. I'm going for a walk now. I want to think."

He left her abruptly and vanished among the trees. Leora, lying there in the sun, had also plenty to think about. He wished her to understand,

without putting it into words, that the reason he was out of love with Denise was because he was in love with herself. If this were so, it was, Leora told herself, extremely distressing, but no fault of hers. She had offered not the faintest encouragement, she had tried to detach herself from them as much and as often as possible; she had been agreeable to him, no more. Thank Heaven, her conscience was clear. On the other hand, she had to confess to herself that the man attracted her, even though he was not at all the sort of man she really liked, and it was possible he might have felt this, though she had taken pains not to show it. Philip was more like a Latin in his intuitions than an Anglo-Saxon. These idle men, she told herself, not without a feeling of irritation, have nothing better to do than to develop their intuitions.

She heartily wished that she and Denise had come alone. Philip was proving the serpent in their Eden, and they would have been happier without him. But probably Denise wouldn't have come without him, so regrets were futile. Bored with her thoughts, she presently took up her book.

Two days passed, and Philip had said nothing to Denise. When the three were together, all went happily enough. What Philip was like when he was alone with Denise, Leora had no means of

knowing, but they were not alone together very much now, owing to Denise's determination, reached too late, not to monopolize him. But Leora knew that a climax of some sort was inevitable. She felt an increased tension, a mounting temperature in their relations with one another. Denise, miserably unhappy, trying to deny to herself the poor quality of Philip's love and the uncertainty of his continued devotion, wondered what Leora knew, but was too proud to speak. Philip, finding his rôle intensely irksome and trying, doubted his ability to go on much longer, but hoped time would discover an easy way out. Leora, who saw most of the comedy, was sincerely sorry for Denise, and the slight contempt she felt for Philip did not preclude a like feeling for herself, for in spite of everything she couldn't deny that she found him lamentably attractive.

On the afternoon of the third day, the climax was reached. Denise, who had gone to Cannes with Philip in the morning, was very silent at lunch, and Leora felt certain that there had been a quarrel, or some sort of emotional crisis. Philip was clearly moody and depressed, and Leora had hard work to keep up even the most desultory conversation. She saw that Denise was near to tears, but in her sensitive state she shrank from confidences,

and she knew she would only talk about it in her own good time.

After lunch, Denise went upstairs. They had danced late at the Casino in Cannes the night before, having acquired a friend of Philip's as a fourth, and Denise said she was going to take a nap. It was a hot day, and Leora, instead of going out on the terrace, stretched herself out on a sofa by the open window with a book. She was looking particularly well in white, and the sunburn she had lately acquired gave her face a color that became it. Philip had settled himself with a book not far away, and there was silence in the house for nearly an hour. But he finished his book and put it down, and Leora, without raising her eyes from her page, knew that he was looking steadily at her, and had been for a long time. The knowledge disturbed her. The room was very still; they could hear the buzzing of bees and flies in the sun outside, and, further away, the pleasant wash of the sea on the rocks. That steady look of his, which she felt rather than saw, made her nervous and self-conscious, and she finally lowered her book and raised her eyes with protest in them. It may have seemed less like protest to him than invitation, for he said, "Leora!" in a low voice, the voice of a lover, and crossed the room in two strides. His movements were so swift,

his object so definite in his own mind that he was on his knees by the sofa before she could raise hands or voice against him, and gathering her to him with purposeful arms, he kissed her on the lips, murmuring:

"Leora, I love you, I love you, you know it."

His act shocked and stung Leora into action, and as she pushed him from her and got to her feet she realized her unhappy position in this little drama. She had drifted, or had been thrust, she hardly knew which, into the rôle of perfidious friend, and all her fine feelings revolted. During that expert kiss she had perceived with crystalline clearness the satisfaction he was taking in this situation of his own creating. "Both these women," she imagined him thinking, "are in love with me." There, in that perfect *mise en scéne,* what could be more exquisite to an emotional trifler?

In a fury with herself and with him, she said, with cold precision:

"You have the courage of your conceit, and that is enormous. Believe me, no kiss was ever more unwarranted or less welcome."

They stood there, face to face, Leora's pale, with flashing eyes, his adoring, puzzled, unbelieving. She went past him, up the stairs, which led out of the drawing room in which they had been sitting,

and out of his sight. She was disgusted, humiliated, ashamed. The fault, she knew well enough, was not altogether his. She had found him attractive, and he had known it and counted too much on it, as such men do. The kiss was nothing, her perfidy everything. She longed to tell Denise what had happened, and to put herself right with her friend, but the difficulties presented by such frankness were enormous. She hesitated, nevertheless, in front of Denise's door, knocked, and hearing nothing, opened it and went in. She saw that the bed had been lain on, but the room was empty, and she failed to find Denise's parasol, or the large sun hat she was in the habit of wearing. She was surprised and puzzled by this. If Denise had gone out, she must have gone down the other staircase, the one used by the maids and by themselves when they had been bathing. She went slowly along to her own room and sat down in front of her mirror. She contemplated her face in the glass for some time, as though in silent communion with herself, got up again with a sigh, and sitting down at the writing-desk, made marks on a piece of blotting-paper. Suddenly she drew a writing-pad toward her, and wrote a letter with great speed, as though she feared to change her mind before it was done.

When it was finished she put on her hat, went to the top of the staircase, and listened. She heard Philip moving about in the room below, and not wishing him to see her she followed Denise's example and went down the back staircase and out of the house. She went toward Antibes. The sun was very hot, but she walked quickly, not minding it or thinking about it. She was anxious to get to the post office in time to catch the post. She had walked about half the distance when she saw Denise coming toward her holding a purple parasol over her head.

"Denise!" Leora cried, when she was near enough to make herself heard, "I couldn't think where you had gone to. Come back with me to the post office. I'm just going to post a letter."

"I've just been," said Denise, "but I'll come back with you if you like." Leora saw that she had been crying. "I've just sent a letter to William."

Leora felt a sudden acute anxiety.

"What did you say, Denise?"

"I wrote and asked him to come down here for a few days."

"Oh, Denise, thank goodness! I'm so glad. How wise of you! And do you know what I've done? I've written to Stuart Rivers, asking him to come, if he can possibly get away. We've got the

villa for another fortnight, and it seemed too bad not to ask him. I do hope they both come. I don't see why Philip should be the only one, besides ourselves, to enjoy this lovely place." She took Denise's arm and said, gently, "Denise, what made you write? I'm so thankful you did."

Trying hard to control her voice, Denise said, "I couldn't bear any more. I had reached the end. You don't know, Leora, you can't possibly know, what that man has made me suffer. Oh, it's not his fault altogether, I know that. He wanted to go, and I couldn't believe it, and tried to keep him. If women only knew the agonies they are bound to feel when they try to keep a man who wants to go they would cut themselves off from him at the first hint of indifference. It's frightful, nothing is worth the awful, prolonged pain of it. I'm over the worst of it now, thank God, but my pride's in the dust, and I can't tell you what I've suffered, and am still suffering." The tears ran down her cheeks. Leora held her arm tightly, and said:

"Go on, tell me everything, and I'll tell you everything."

"I want William," Denise sobbed, her handkerchief to her eyes. "I need him. I want to see if we can't start again, on better terms. Perhaps I've made him suffer as Philip has made me. He's

always been so much fonder of me than I have of him."

"The only right basis for matrimony," said Leora, "if it isn't carried to extremes."

A car came toward them, and Denise wiped her face hastily and made a valiant effort to control herself. When it had passed she was calmer, and paused in the road to dust her face with powder and tidy her hair.

"I wrote the letter," she went on, "and then, as I'd been crying, I went down the back stairs and walked about in the garden till my eyes were less red. Then I went to the door, and looked in, to see if you were asleep, because if you weren't, I meant to ask you to come with me." She paused, and Leora's heart beat more quickly. "And as I looked, I saw Philip cross the room and take you in his arms. I saw him kiss you."

"Denise!" cried Leora. "Oh, Denise, I can explain . . . !"

"Wait," interrupted Denise. "It doesn't matter at all. I'm glad I saw. I had already made up my mind. And I saw *how* it happened. Even if it had been your fault, I don't think I would have cared much then, and I'm sure it wasn't. And as I stood there, I seemed to free myself with one horrible, tearing wrench from him, and from my love for

him. It seemed to free me forever. I went straight off to the post office with William's letter."

"Oh, thank Heaven you understood," cried Leora. "I don't know what I should have done if anything had come between us, particularly *that*. And, Denise, think what an escape for you! Think, if your life had been smashed up by such a man. A mere . . ."

"No, no, don't call him names," implored Denise. "He is what he is. He can't help it. But it's finished, it's finished, it's finished!"

"Denise, I must tell you. I want to tell you. He did attract me very much. He's such a beautiful creature. I want to be absolutely honest about it. He's such a joy to look at, and he's got a sort of damnable charm. . . . It's partly my fault that he kissed me. You know, he felt that he attracted me, and he responded. It was only a passing thing, I never meant him to know it—I hardly realized it myself. And all along I knew what he was, in spite of his attraction. . . ."

"Then if you felt that, Leora, you won't have such a contempt for me, perhaps," said Denise, pitifully.

"Contempt!" cried Leora, touched to the heart. "That I swear I never had. Never. But, if it comforts you to know it, I did—I was . . . Oh,

how absurd we are! And how sad it all is, somehow. Denise, how *young* we've both been. Perhaps it's been good for us. Now we must pretend that nothing has happened. We must be as friendly with Philip as possible, and not let him see that he has made the faintest difference in our lives. You, of course, most of all. It will be hardest for you. You will have to act, and be very brave; it will take courage."

"I can do it, with your help," Denise said; and the two women looked at each other, and smiled.

It was Leora who—as the villa had been lent to her and she was nominally the hostess—when the telegrams came, said to Philip:

"I have to break the news to you, Philip, that William and a friend of mine are coming to-morrow to stay until we give up the villa, and I'm afraid there simply won't be room enough for five of us. It's such a tiny place. We shall hate losing you, but there it is."

"It was quite time you pushed me out," said Philip, easily. "It's been so perfectly delightful here that I couldn't make up my mind to go. But, as a matter of fact, I've promised some friends to join them in Monte Carlo, and motor back with them next week."

"Oh, so that's all right," said Denise. "I'm glad

you're not going back yet, for your own sake. It's heavenly down here now."

Philip said good-bye the next day. He said it to Denise with the greatest appearance of regret; with a look and a word, and a quick turning away, and a suggestion of secret and undying sorrow. His real feelings were those of relief, and of gratitude. He said it to Leora with genuine regret and a sense of loss. It would have been only a matter of time, he supposed, before Leora stood in Denise's place. Perhaps, and perhaps not. It was difficult to say. She continued to puzzle and interest him. He hadn't been able to make up his mind, even yet, whether he had been right or wrong. She was a very charming woman, at any rate, and there are times when a man is bound to admit that even matrimony might not be wholly a bad thing.

He thought he could have been very fond of Denise, as a man can be fond of a married woman older than himself, but for her ideals, her emotions, and her unfortunate tenacity. But women of forty, he ruminated, are apt to be tenacious, poor dears.

He went to an hotel in Monte Carlo and obtained a room. He then went to another hotel not too far away and asked for Madame Maury. The clerk said that Madame would be down in a few moments, and Philip strolled to the window and stood

looking out and whistling softly to himself. He had a delicious sensation of freedom and lightness, as though he had been fettered and was now at liberty again. Outside, the streets and buildings were dazzling to the eyes, under the steady and generous sun, and at the end of the road which ran past the hotel he was able to see a metallic blue section of the Mediterranean. It would have been a pity to go back now. And here in Monte he'd be able to get some golf. He stood there presenting a very fine and shapely back to the eyes of the smiling Madame Maury, who presently approached, her little griffon under her arm.

The Country Walk

The Country Walk

WHEN she reached the station the Selwyns were already there. Mrs. Selwyn, short, energetic, sensible, alert, was rearranging the contents of her husband's knapsack to suit herself, while he looked down upon her with tolerant amusement. He stood talking to a tall, young man in brown tweeds, the sight of whom at once brought up before the prejudiced eyes of Lydia those fashion-paper photographs of graceful and elegant young men snapshotted on some Scottish moor by the side of an equally graceful and elegant lady of title.

She was angry with the Selwyns, who, she felt, must be responsible for his presence there. She made up her mind that she would not show herself until just before train time, and retreated to the other side of the booking office, where she could not be seen. Already the day was spoiled for her.

The Selwyns were always kind, and often tried to include her in their activities, but she shrank back. She had nothing in common with these com-

fortable, pleasant people with their comfortable, pleasant lives. But after the cruel winter that was just past, a country walk, now that the primroses and violets were out, was too tempting to be missed.

"You and I," Mr. Selwyn had said, "will walk together and discuss world politics. The rest of the party can take care of themselves."

There were to be eight people altogether, and she saw, by glancing round the corner of the booking office, that there were now five. But for the presence of that young man in brown tweeds she would have shown herself, but the mere sight of him put her on the defensive. To be looked over, to be found wanting in every particular by such as he—it was intolerable. She would take care never to be near him, all day. She wished he might never be so much as aware of her presence.

It was nearly time, and she had not yet bought her ticket, so she walked bravely up to the window, knowing that she was now within sight of the others. There was no going back. Seven and sixpence return! She had only nine shillings with her. It was an understood thing that each member of these walking parties paid his own way, and they were sure to stop somewhere for tea. Well, there was no escape now. Mr. Selwyn came up to her as she left the window, his knapsack on his back.

"Ah! Here you are. Just in time. Come along and meet the rest of the party."

Already he seemed like a stranger to her. So did Mrs. Selwyn. She felt that she was alone among strangers.

"How do you do? How do you do?"

There was an engaged pair, Miss Blake and Mr. Nash. Miss Blake was very pink and pretty, Mr. Nash sturdy and dark. There was a Miss Roberta Phillimore, a woman novelist, of whom the Selwyns had often spoken admiringly. There was also a Mr. Madison, a painter, whose wife didn't like walking.

"Oh, and Mr. Carstairs, Miss Randall."

She barely nodded to him. Her look said:

"I meet young men like you every day. I think nothing of them, nothing at all."

Mr. Selwyn captured her little parcel of lunch and put it in his knapsack.

"Now come along everybody."

Mr. Selwyn strode in front of them, like a man who sets out with determination on a long and dangerous journey. They found an empty third-class smoking compartment which they filled comfortably, and soon the train slid out of the dark, hooded station into the soft, bright day.

Lydia found herself sitting between Miss Philli-

more and Mr. Carstairs, the two people she would have liked best to avoid. Miss Phillimore was sensibly and heavily shod, and wore ancient and serviceable tweeds. She had a long, pale face and very bright, dark eyes that seemed to burn. She had a certain attraction, partly owing to her rich voice and partly to her aristocratic nose and slender hands and feet. She and Mr. Carstairs talked across her—not rudely at all. They tried to make her join in, but she had nothing to add to what they were saying, for they were talking of Switzerland, where she had never been. She could only have said:

"I don't know. I've never been there. No, I've never seen it."

Now and then she glanced quickly at Mr. Carstairs, and at each glance she hardened her heart against him because of his small Guardsman's mustache, because of his even teeth, because of his good looks and nonchalant ease and good humor. Good humor! When you have everything, everything, it is easy enough to laugh and make jokes and smile at people. His cap was on his knees, and she saw with something like fear that his hair was thick and vital, and grew well. No, she had nothing to say to him, nothing at all. Their lives did not touch anywhere.

Mr. Selwyn and Mr. Nash studied maps and discussed the day's route. Miss Blake, Mr. Madison, and Mrs. Selwyn talked about plays. Lydia changed places with Miss Phillimore so that she could continue to talk to Mr. Carstairs about Switzerland.

"I was a fool to have come," she kept saying to herself. "Why did I come? I knew perfectly well it would be like this."

Every one except herself wore suitable country clothes—good, strong shoes, tweeds, felt hats. Lydia, not possessing these things, wore a brown linen dress two summers old, a sweater and scarf, and an old straw hat. She minded these things, minded them fiercely and hotly.

"They don't know," she said to herself, "how difficult life is for me. They haven't an inkling of it. And if they did know, they wouldn't care. It's all so easy for them."

Pretty Miss Blake, not long out of school, with a soft pink and white face, like a face on a magazine cover, was soon to marry Mr. Nash, whose parents gave him fifteen hundred a year, besides what he earned.

"How kind God always is to the fortunate!" thought Lydia.

"And all down the southern slopes," Miss Phillimore was saying, "the *wild* flowers—of course

you've seen them, everybody's seen them—but what a Paradise on earth all the same. It's a sight I never tire of."

"I feel like that about Kashmir," Lydia longed to say. "The last time I was in the Ural mountains in the spring, I said to myself that it was almost as lovely as Kashmir. But of course everybody knows Kashmir."

She had to bite her lip to keep from saying it.

"Do you know Buckinghamshire well?" Mr. Carstairs was asking her, leaning forward to catch her eye.

"No," she answered. "No better than I know Switzerland."

He laughed.

"The Chilterns are lovely," he said. "As you'll see something of them for the first time to-day, I'm rather sorry the leaves aren't out yet. When you know them well it doesn't matter. You love them winter or summer."

She thought it nice of him to say that. Decent, anyway. Then Mr. Selwyn said, looking up from his map:

"Bob, you know this country pretty well. Is it worth while trying to reach Windover, or shall we turn off to the right at Seller's Farm and make for Great Marlings?"

Mr. Carstairs sat by Mr. Selwyn and looked at the map, and Lydia sat shut up within herself once more. She rejoiced that he had gone further away. There was no need now for him to trouble himself to talk to her. "Once we get off the train," she told herself, "I will walk alone. They shan't spoil the country for me."

Mr. Selwyn offered her a Sunday paper, and she pretended to read it, but instead of reading it she dreamed, and saw pictures. She saw Miss Phillimore turn to her with admiration and interest in her eyes.

"Do you know, you're an entirely new type to me? I wish I knew you. Will you come and see me? I feel, somehow, that I could put you into a book, you remote, elusive thing."

She saw herself on a hilltop with Mr. Carstairs.

"This is the very spot where I first knew I loved you," he was saying. "The trees were bare then, Lydia. Do you remember that first day? You hardly spoke to me, you wouldn't even look at me, but I knew, I knew."

Fool! Fool!

She forced herself to read:

"A new element has entered into the increasingly difficult problem of German reparations. . . ."

They reached their station after an hour's jour-

ney. The gray haze that had dulled the day in London was absent here. The morning sun blessed and warmed them, and painted the spring countryside in flat, vivid colors. Green, incredibly smooth meadows and rounded hills, broad, red-brown fields, patches of purplish woods, unleafed as yet, wide, placid blue sky in which the soaring larks made the world choral and gay. As they left the village behind them, they heard now and again the thin cry of a new lamb.

"Little darlings!" thought Lydia, and ran up a bank and peered through a hedge in order to see one, and felt a lump come into her throat at the sight of anything so young and so innocent in this complicated world.

She thought that if she could only walk alone she would feel happy. She wanted to be apart from all these strangers, who, with their new and unknown personalities, their alien lives, seemed to come between her and the simple beauty of the day. But when she lagged behind, Mr. Selwyn, or Mrs. Selwyn, brisk and cheerful, and once Mr. Carstairs, waited for her, knowing that she did not know the way.

"Tired already?" they asked.

But Mr. Selwyn was busy with his map a good deal of the time, watching for footpaths and turn-

ings, and Mr. Nash and Miss Blake walked with him. Mr. Madison had a great deal to say to Mrs. Selwyn, and Lydia thought she was superfluous there. She did not wish to attach herself to Miss Phillimore and Mr. Carstairs, because she was uncomfortably conscious of him, and Miss Phillimore she thought ignored her.

Even before they reached the top of the hill, where they were to eat their lunch, she was tired. She seldom took exercise—she had so little time. She worked all day, and on Sundays she couldn't, as a rule, leave her mother. All these others played golf or tennis, or hunted. At least, Miss Blake hunted. Lydia's shoes, which did well enough in London, were not heavy enough for the country, and the stones hurt her feet. And although they were two years old and had never offended before, one of them now chafed her heel most painfully. But she walked defiantly and proudly. At least, none of these people should know. When they reached the top, and all the others threw themselves down in the sun to rest, she said she wasn't tired at all, and walked along by the hedge searching for primroses. She found them, looking out of their nests of green leaves with pale, luminous faces, and picked some to put in her belt. If you can't gather asphodel on the southern slope of some Swiss moun-

tain, you must be content to gather frail primroses in prickly English hedges, she told herself. She found violets, too, short-stemmed and growing close to the fine turf, so that when she looked down at them she thought it was like looking through the earth into little scraps of infinity.

She returned to find lunch being unpacked. When her own small, brown parcel emerged from the knapsack, she took it and opened it.

"No private lunches here, Lydia!" cried Mrs. Selwyn. "Every one puts his lunch in the middle, and everything is pooled. Help yourself to anything you like the look of."

Horrors! She had counted on eating her own frugal lunch by herself. There had been no time to pack a nice one—the materials, too, were lacking. She had only a thick, ham sandwich, some bread and cheese, and a small orange. Every one else had thin, sharply cut, delicately made sandwiches done up in oiled paper—chicken, paté, tongue, tomato.

She flushed as she saw the contents of that little parcel exposed to the public gaze. She suffered exquisitely. Mrs. Selwyn ought to have known better—it was hateful . . . !

She took a tongue sandwich that had come from the Selwyns' parcel, and observed that her own lunch

remained untouched—ignored. She was humiliated.

Mr. Carstairs, talking, reached out for more supplies. His hand alighted upon that inch-thick sandwich, seized upon it. He ate it and looked for another like it; then, disappointed, went elsewhere. She felt vindicated, restored. She ate her own bread and cheese, and Mr. Carstairs ate her orange, an unusually small one. Although she knew that chance had directed his hand, although she appeared to be quite unconscious of all this, and disliked him no less, she was grateful to him, even while ignoring him.

After lunch he lay stretched out on the turf near her, his cap over his eyes. In his red-brown tweeds and brown, hand-knitted stockings, she thought him wonderful to look at. She admired his wide shoulders and long, straight legs, his natural grace and unconsciousness. And yet she resented all these things. He was nearer to her than any one else, but she leaned on her elbow, looking down at the tiny plants that made up the close, fine turf, and ignored him.

Suddenly she heard his voice.

"Mrs. Selwyn tells me you teach Italian," he said. "Where did you live in Italy? I suppose you know it well."

"I've never been to Italy."

"Oh! Then how . . . ?"

"My mother is Italian."

"I see. I thought there was something . . ."

She saw his eyes looking out at her from the dark shadow his cap made.

"Something? What do you mean?"

"Something not altogether English about you."

"I am English."

"Well, your vowels aren't. Neither are your eyes. Forgive me if I'm not being sufficiently impersonal."

She made no answer.

"It must be fun to be bilingual," he said.

She raised defiant eyes.

"I don't find it fun to be at all."

He was silenced by that, and by her meaning, and looked at her as though he were wondering about her, but meant to keep his thoughts to himself. Then he turned over on his side and faced the other way. Presently Mr. Selwyn collected the party and said it was time to go on.

The rest for lunch had stiffened her limbs and made her less inclined for walking. Her chafed heel hurt her intolerably, but she walked very erect, without limping, keeping, as a rule, ahead of the others, as though she found the pace too slow. There were many stiles to be climbed, and in getting

over one of them her skirt caught on an upright post and she fell headlong, grazing her wrist. Mr. Carstairs jumped the fence and came to her assistance, but she was already on her feet, furious with herself for having fallen, furious with him for having seen her fall. Of course, it must be *she* who made an exhibition of herself. Miss Blake didn't fall. Miss Phillimore surmounted the stiles with dignity and a certain graceful agility. Mrs. Selwyn was clumsy, but sure.

"I caught my skirt," she said briefly to Mr. Carstairs, and hid from him her wrist, where the blood was slowly pricking through the grazed skin.

In the afternoon they faced due west, and had the sun in their eyes. Now and again they walked on a hard road where motors passed from time to time. All along its edges, straws, dropped from laden carts, made a thin, uneven line of shining silver. The soft gray buds of the willows were little balls of light against the sun, and Lydia stopped and gathered some of the branches, and imagined that the others looked askance at her as though they disliked the idea of returning to town with country plunder. She carried the branches over her shoulder as she walked. She heard Miss Phillimore say:

"There have been no giants since Thomas Hardy. When will there be giants again?"

Mr. Madison said the world clamored for mediocrity, and got it.

"As long as books are the diversion of the many," said he, "instead of the solace of the few, they will continue to be mediocre. The demand is still for quantity, and when that is the case, quality goes by the board."

"Mind you," said Miss Phillimore, whose books circulated vigorously in every library, "I don't say that the better things are ignored. . . ."

"You would be ungrateful to say that," said Mr. Madison.

Then Miss Blake.

"I simply adored Rachel Carmichael in *The Passionate Seeker,* Miss Phillimore. Do tell me; was she drawn from life?"

And so they talked on, regardless of her.

"How am I to get out of this dark rut I'm in?" she asked herself. "I'd like to throw an enormous stone through an enormous plate-glass window, just for the sake of the heavenly crash. I'm as interesting as Miss Blake. No, more, much, much more. Only they don't know it. No one knows it."

Mr. Carstairs happened to be abreast of her just then.

"Have you read any of her books?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"No," said Lydia. "Not one. And I don't mean to."

He smiled as though he were trying not to smile.

"Neither have I. But, then, I never do read novels. What sort of reading do you like?"

"Biography," she said, and flushed. Whenever she talked about herself she felt shy and ashamed. Some one spoke to him then, and she was alone again. They were in superb beech woods now, woods that were not yet touched with any green, and she walked ankle deep in last year's dead leaves, and the rustling they made drowned the talk of the others, so that she could almost imagine there was no one else in the woods at all.

"You're tired," said Mr. Selwyn, catching up to her.

"Yes," she admitted, "but don't tell the others."

"I'm afraid we came too far. Ten miles, if you're not in walking trim, is no joke. But we'll soon be in Windover, and we'll have tea there. I hope you've enjoyed it."

"Parts of it," she said.

"The downhill parts?"

She shook her head.

"How do you like Bob Carstairs?"

"I don't think I dislike him," she said guardedly.

He smiled. He knew her.

"He's a good fellow. He has brains, too."

By the time they reached the inn at Windover her feet were bruised and swollen, her heel throbbed and pained, her muscles ached. The tea revived her a little; hot, life-giving, brown tea in thick, white cups, and slices, huge slices, of fresh, white bread.

But the tea was one and sixpence apiece, and when she gave Mr. Selwyn the money for hers, she was left penniless. The village they had started from was only six miles distant, for they had traveled in a horseshoe, and now that they were returning from Windover, which was further up the line, there would be perhaps a shilling more to pay on the fare. Some one jokingly suggested walking the six miles, and Lydia, far more tired than any of them, said, surprised at the sound of her own voice:

"I'd like to walk. I think I will walk."

"Nonsense, Lydia," cried sensible Mrs. Selwyn. "You'd be a wreck to-morrow."

"I'd like to walk," she insisted. "I will if any one else will. This is the nicest time of the whole day."

They seemed not to hear her, or, if they heard, supposed her to be joking. The idea of walking further attracted no one. They talked of other things.

"Then I'll go alone," said Lydia, defiantly.

After tea the party straggled up the village street toward the station. Sunday couples passed them, walking arm-in-arm. The bare trees made long, fine shadows on the road. As they neared the station, a signpost at the crossroads pointed the way to Chorleyworth, and Lydia, without a word, dropped behind, and then began walking quickly in the opposite direction. But Mr. Selwyn saw her and ran after her, calling, "Lydia! Lydia! This way."

He caught up with her.

"Where on earth are you going?"

"I'm going to walk to Chorleyworth."

"Indeed, you're not. No more walking for you, my child. You're dead-beat. Come along."

She protested. But he drew her away with him.

"Come along. The train will be in soon. I never heard such nonsense. It would be dark long before you got to Chorleyworth—if you ever got there."

At the station he went ahead and bought tickets for the extra distance for Lydia, for his wife, and for himself. She observed that no one had noticed her turning back; no one had missed her at all. Only Mr. Selwyn. When the train came in she said to him, looking away from him:

"I can't pay you now for the extra fare."

He was amused.

"Who wants you to, you absurd child?"

She sat in a corner of the compartment, telling herself that it had been a hideous day. She was angry with them all, angry with herself. She hardly spoke at all on the way back. Mr. Carstairs took *Truth* out of his pocket and gave it to her, and she read it through from cover to cover. She handed it back to him as the train entered the station, and got up and stood with her hand on the door, ready to escape. She would have to walk home, for she had no money, and she wanted to run off ahead of the others so that they shouldn't know.

They were all saying good-bye to each other. It had been a delightful day, absolutely successful in every way. They planned future meetings, and their voices, raised above the noise of the train, seemed strident and overemphatic. Miss Phillimore said to Miss Blake:

"You *will* come to see me, won't you? You *won't* forget?"

"You see, darling, she means to put you into a book," cried Mr. Nash, fatuously. Miss Blake laughed.

Lydia, holding the door ajar as the train slowed

down, turned her head, and in the midst of the noise and chatter she, too, raised her voice.

All the chagrins of the day, all the chagrins of her little life, of her hard, short, unhappy life, came to her lips, but she fought them down.

"Good-bye!" she cried. But on the top of that, dropping her voice, hoping that they would hear and yet fearing that they might not fail to hear, she threw back at them into the noise and bustle of farewells, "I hate you all!"

She sprang out of the door on to the platform and sped away through the moving crowd toward the gates. Her face burned, as her heart burned. She wanted to get away, away, away, before any of them could see her again. She fled, she collided with people, she pushed past them.

But at the gates the crowd moved slowly. Tickets were being given up, and for that purpose children were put down and picked up again, tired babies were shifted from one arm to the other, armfuls of willow and catkins impeded searching hands. Lydia struggled but could not get on. She held her ticket ready, frantic at the delay. And then what she most dreaded happened. She felt a touch on her arm. She turned her head slowly, guiltily. Mr. Carstairs stood behind her, and their eyes met.

And guilty and ashamed though she was, her eyes looked angrily and defiantly into his.

"You shouldn't have run away like that. I'm going to take you home if you'll let me. We'll get a taxi outside."

She thought the Selwyns had sent him. She shook her head.

"No, no. I don't want you to. Please don't."

They were through the gates now. He was walking beside her exactly as if she had not spoken. Her face was white with humiliation and weariness.

He looked at her severely. He returned angry look for angry look.

"You know," he said, "you want shaking badly. That's what you want."

She threw him a resentful glance.

"Did you hear what I said when I left the carriage?"

"Certainly I heard."

"And the others? Did they hear?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

"Well, if you heard, why did you come after me?"

"I'm not intimidated by that sort of thing. I've got a niece aged six who behaves no better at times. You've been like a naughty child all day. You've been simply intolerable. You know you have."

He walked easily and carelessly, but his face was stern. He looked down at her like a judge. He repeated, severely:

"You've behaved intolerably, haven't you?"

"Oh," she cried, "you couldn't understand. It's no good my trying to explain, of course. All your talk . . . the wild flowers in Switzerland . . . 'but of course *everybody's* seen them!' You're all so safe and so comfortable, and so pleased with everything. Purring at each other all day. Well, *you* didn't purr, but . . ."

"It's no good," he said. "You can't make any decent excuses for yourself. You might as well admit that you behaved like a spoiled child. Didn't you?"

His severity soothed her. She adored it. She felt suddenly meek and happy and acquiescent. She walked obediently and meekly at his side. His anger, by some magic that was incomprehensible to her, made him no longer a stranger. There was nothing strange, now, about him. Nothing at all. There was nothing to resent. Side by side they walked, while he still looked severely at her and waited for her admission. It came at last.

"I know I did," she said, very humbly.

Then he smiled.

"What's your address?"

She gave it to him. Like most humble addresses it was long and complicated. In the cab he said suddenly:

"Did you hurt your arm much when you fell?"

She pushed up her sleeve to show him.

"It's stopped hurting now."

He examined it. He looked at her face searchingly. Then he looked away, out of the window, and Lydia thought she saw a change come over his face. It seemed to grow harder and more mature, more resolute, too. She heard him sigh.

"Do you often behave as you did to-day?"

"Fairly often."

"I suppose," he said, "I'm in for a lot of trouble then."

Just Little Things

Just Little Things

THE table, shrunken now to a small, domestic circle instead of the hospitable oblong with rounded ends to which it was more accustomed, bore on its darkly polished surface many perfect things. There were fine lace doilies, shapely and elegant Queen Anne silver with its well-bred luster, delicate Irish glass, flowers and fruit—for the dinner was nearing its end—from a shop in Piccadilly that knew nothing of seasons. Upon all these choice things the candles gleamed dimly from behind green silk shades, and the green walls, upon which hung painted frigates under full sail that tossed on choppy waves, and men-of-war with high bows delivering broadsides, were scarcely illuminated at all. Neither were the velvet curtains of deep red that, drawn evenly across the windows, shut out as much of the March twilight as still lingered in South Street.

The table also bore upon its polished surface a pair of elbows that were neither too sharp nor too plump. They were shapely and well-cared-for elbows, and they belonged to a shapely and well-

cared-for lady who was at this moment unspeakably bored with life. Her name was Mrs. Richard Renfrew, and she was thinking what a curious and paradoxical thing it was that Dick, who had the honor to be her husband, made her life at the same time possible for her and impossible.

There are such men. They give the women who succeed in attracting their notice everything in the world their hearts are set upon, and then they bore them to death, or irritate them to death, or expect too much of them. Dick Renfrew bored, irritated and expected too much of his wife. He gave her everything, and then spoilt it for her. So she was thinking, this well-cared-for lady.

Just as she had known when they sat down to dinner that he would pick up the menu and say, "And what are the glad tidings to-night?" so she knew that he would say as he rose from the table, "Well, I don't believe the King's had a better dinner than we've had."

An appreciative husband, her friends said. She called him something else.

To-night she had been studying him, watching him, all through dinner. She noticed, with bored resentment, how he wiped his mouth, how he picked up and put down his glass of claret, how he moved his head when he spoke. She tried to see him as

though she had never seen him before. Suppose he had been some one else's husband, would she have found dining *tête-à-tête* with him so tedious? For it was tedious, cruelly tedious. There were hundreds of people in London who had no idea that they were asked to dine with the Richard Renfrews simply in order that Mrs. Richard Renfrew might not have to listen to her husband's too familiar words, hear his too familiar voice addressed exclusively to her, watch his too familiar mannerisms.

As for her, she never permitted herself to grow familiar to him or to any one else. Mrs. Renfrew knew the value of her own variable moods. She encouraged and cultivated them. When she was irritable, she was irritable amusingly. She made an occasion of it. When she was petulant, she was petulant in the manner of a spoiled but attractive child. When she was affectionate, as she rarely was, he was her slave. When she was docile and reasonable, he became alarmed and puzzled, thinking there must be something behind her docility. When she couldn't endure the sight of him and said so, he told himself that she wasn't well, and bought her a ring, or a new fur. When she raged and said that her life was unbearable, he suggested going abroad for six months.

Such was Mr. Renfrew.

To-night she was moody, but he found her mood difficult to classify. She said little. She started at any unexpected sound. If he touched her, she shrank away as though her flesh were raw. When he spoke to her, her thoughts seemed far off, and he had to repeat himself before he could engage her attention. Contrary to her usual habit, she smoked cigarettes all through dinner. Once she sent him to look for her handkerchief in the library, and then discovered it in her lap. Later she said she felt a draft, and sent the maid in search of an open window. When she heard there were no windows open, she said:

"That's absurd. There's a gale blowing on my back. You go, Dick." And when he failed to find anything to account for it, she shivered and said:

"Then I must have a chill," and sent for a wrap.

She said that the fruit had no taste at all, and that the coffee tasted of paraffin. She sighed heavily, and twice spoke of her mother who had been dead many years. Altogether she was incomprehensible. As the dinner neared its end she looked at him with nervous apprehension whenever he opened his mouth to speak. She winced as though she dreaded what he might say. Finally, she broke into some innocent remark of his to exclaim:

"For Heaven's sake don't say that the King couldn't have had a better dinner. If you do I warn you I'll scream at the top of my voice."

He looked anxiously at her.

"All right, Lily, all right. Don't get excited about it. All the same, it *was* a——"

"Stop!" she cried, her hands over her ears. "Stop!"

"What on earth is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. Nothing and everything." She got up, pushing back her chair. "We'll have coffee and liqueurs in the library. I'm tired of sitting here. I feel restless."

No, certainly she wasn't at all well, he thought. Nerves all gone to pieces. He'd tell Findlay-Pryce to call and see her as soon as possible.

He placed a small card table beside her chair, and found her patience cards for her. Then he settled himself by the fire with the evening paper.

He thought he'd better warn Findlay-Pryce that she was remarkably jumpy, and that he'd have to use tact, plenty of tact.

"Lucky thing she isn't married to some men," he thought. "Anybody but me would drive her silly in her present state."

Meanwhile, although she seemed absorbed in her game, she was conscious of his every movement.

Why was it, she wondered, that some men managed to do everything in an irritating manner? The way he jerked his paper about was driving her nearly distracted. The way he rolled his cigar in his mouth as he smoked it annoyed her extremely. Perhaps if he had been some one else's husband she wouldn't have found these little things so maddening. As it was she felt she couldn't stand them another day, another hour. He heard her sigh impatiently, loudly.

"Look here, Lily," he said, "you're run down. What do you say to going to Le Touquet for Easter?"

She swept the cards together with nervous hands.

"No, I don't want to go away for Easter. Everybody does that, and they make it impossible for every one else. Besides, I don't like Le Touquet. Oh, for Heaven's sake, Dick, don't gape at me like that. I think I'll go to bed presently and read. You do nothing but gape and utter platitudes."

She laid out the cards again, and he returned to his paper. Presently he tossed it aside.

"I remember now something that I meant to tell you at dinner. I happened to walk up Bond Street to-day, and I saw the very bracelet you've

been wanting in a window." He described the bracelet while she went on with her game.

When he had finished she exclaimed:

"Now, what is the good of all that? If you had really wanted to buy the bracelet, you'd have bought it instead of talking about it now. I do hate being told of things beforehand. You only do it because you hope I'll say it's an extravagance. If you wanted to buy it, why didn't you?"

He began to explain. He didn't buy it then and there, because he couldn't remember if she liked rubies. He knew she liked emeralds, but he wasn't sure about rubies. Besides, if she remembered, the last time he bought her a piece of jewelry she said she preferred to——

In the middle of this she swept the cards into a heap and got up.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake don't bore me with all that. When I want to be quiet you seem to be wound up. You go droning on and on about things that don't interest me—Oh, yes, I know I'm in a vile mood. If you're aware of it why don't you leave me alone? It's all I ask of you." She went to the door. "You treat me like a child. I do loathe being *humored*. Good night. I'm going to my room where I can have some peace."

She went.

He lighted a fresh cigar and stood with his back to the fire, rocking on his heels and toes. It was fortunate that she was not there, as it was a trick of his that she particularly disliked. He was not angry. He was not even very much hurt. He was chiefly sorry for her. She was obviously not at all well, and he wondered if Findlay-Pryce was, after all, what she needed.

"Perhaps we'd better go abroad for a few months," he said to himself.

He stood there smoking and rocking on his toes. They'd go to Algiers this time, and come back by way of Spain. Then the Italian Lakes. Then Switzerland, perhaps, getting back in time for Ascot. He oughtn't to leave his business for so long, but hang it all, she was worth it. A few months abroad, just the two of them, would fix her up in fine style. What she wanted was a change, a complete change.

Upstairs Mrs. Renfrew wrote a few letters. Only one was of any importance. The others were merely written to make it look less important. It was addressed to a gentleman with a foreign name, whose dark and ornamental presence at dinner had frequently proved a bulwark between her and boredom. It said merely:

"I've reached the end of my endurance. The an-

swer is 'Yes.' Victoria, eleven o'clock, Wednesday."

She gave it, among other letters, to her maid to post.

At Victoria Station on the following Wednesday, a tall, dark man of perhaps thirty-five stood watching the people who were giving up their tickets and showing their passports before taking their seats on the Dover train. Women glanced at him and then glanced again, but he was quite accustomed to attracting the attention of women. He looked at the same time nervous, eager, and complacent. Nervous, because Mr. Renfrew, who was now his enemy, was one of those men who like breaking apples in their hands, eager because this was the sort of adventure for which men of his type exist, and complacent because the sharer of this adventure was a very pretty and sought-after lady who had kept him at a distance for over two years.

When he saw her he made a sign to his porter, and walked away toward the waiting train. He paused at the bookstall, and examined magazines and papers, and here presently the lady joined him. They were mutually surprised at this meeting for the benefit of any acquaintances who might possibly be traveling to Paris by the same train.

"You here, Carlo? But how delightful! I do so hate traveling alone. Dick found he couldn't manage to come with me."

"Then he will join you later, perhaps?"

"Oh, no. He can't get away just now. And as I'm only going to buy clothes, it would be very boring for him, poor dear, so perhaps it's just as well."

The porter deposited her hand luggage in the train, and she tipped him. For a moment the two were silent. The tall man looked down at her with a dark look that had stirred the blood of many a lady. He spoke in a low voice.

"It is true. We are going, together! I cannot believe it yet."

His eyes were wonderful. They said everything. She dared not return his look. She murmured as she turned over the magazines, "Don't. Let's try to be matter of fact. And we haven't started yet. Anything may happen."

To which he made answer:

"Nothing will happen that we wish not to happen."

She picked up a book.

"I haven't told him anything. He's been away for two days. I'll telegraph to him from Paris,

to-night. You'll remind me to do that, won't you?"

A smile passed between them.

"Dear, brave little Lily," he said.

"I'll take these," she said to the attendant, raising her voice. "Don't call me brave, Carlo. I'm not brave. I had reached the end, that was all."

"For us, the beginning," he replied. His originality was at no time startling. He never startled. He merely satisfied. He failed in nothing. He was the perfect lover.

Their seats in the Pullman were some distance apart, for she did not wish their presence there to seem prearranged. There would be talk enough later, and although she was prepared to endure the scandal that would follow, she wished to postpone it as long as possible. As the train drew out of the station, she settled herself comfortably, throwing off her heavy fur coat, removing her gloves, and placing her books and magazines on the table. She wondered how she would like traveling without her maid, Horton, and she told herself that, after all, traveling with a maid generally meant looking after two instead of one, the perfect courier-maid being hard to find. And when she was with Dick, there was no need for either herself or her maid to do anything. Dick, to do him justice, was one of those men who seem to be born on good terms with maps,

guidebooks, railway officials, men in booking offices, porters, hotel keepers, and waiters.

But Carlo also was a traveler. Born in Italy of a roving, Italian father, and a beautiful Rumanian mother, he had lived everywhere, he had been everywhere. He, too, liked comfort. He, too, understood the niceties of travel.

The rain was just beginning to lash the windows, making long streaks across them; but soon the streaks became merged, and the water ran steadily down the panes. It had been a cold, threatening morning in London, not worse than many another morning, but now that they were out in the open country the wind seemed to have risen surprisingly, bringing the rain with it. She saw the branches of the bare trees bending and waving miserably. And she told herself that this journey of theirs might, as far as weather was concerned, have begun better. But there was something in the thought of discomforts, and even dangers shared with one who loved tenderly, and who was tenderly loved—for ever since writing that letter three days ago she had believed that she loved him tenderly—that was far from unpleasant.

The Channel had obeyed the orders of the wind in a way that was slavish and exaggerated. It was gray and heaving. It was more gray and more

heaving than the force of the wind seemed to warrant, but no doubt farther out at sea there was a determined gale. Lily congratulated herself that she was a tolerably good sailor. She had asked Carlo to engage a cabin on the boat, so that if she should be overcome, she could retire to it in decent seclusion. Certainly she would take pains not to be seen by him if she were not looking—or behaving—her best. People rarely saw Mrs. Renfrew when she was not looking her best, for on those occasions if there were a door that she could shut upon herself, she shut it.

Therefore it was decidedly annoying that he should have forgotten to engage the cabin for her.

"But, Carlo, I wrote to you especially to remind you," she pointed out to him, when he confessed that it had been overlooked.

"I know, dearest lady. It is entirely my fault. My head can stand much, as a rule, but this great happiness has filled my mind so that I forget little things. You forgive me?"

She smiled at him.

"I think I can forgive you anything, even that. All the same, it's going to be a perfectly beastly crossing."

Chairs were found for them in a more or less sheltered part of the upper deck, for the rain had

stopped. There would be little respite from the wind anywhere, said the sailor who placed them there, but Mrs. Renfrew said that whatever happened she must be in the open. She must stay where the air was fresh and cold. She would take no risks, now that there was no secluded cabin ready to receive her.

"There is the ladies' saloon," suggested Carlo, but she threw him a look of horror.

"Don't talk to me of the ladies' saloon. There is no such thing. Seasick women are never ladies. Now we'll make ourselves as comfortable as we can here."

He placed the two chairs close together, and then tucked her rug about her with extreme care.

"You are comfortable? You are sure you will be warm enough? You are happy?" He was solicitous and tender. She assured him that all was well.

When he had turned up the collar of his heavy ulster, pulled down his cap and seated himself beside her, she said:

"Now let's make our plans. Thank goodness there doesn't seem to be a soul on the boat who knows us."

"I knew," he repeated, "that nothing could happen that we did not wish to happen."

But after all they made no plans. It was impossible to make plans when the sea heaved and the wind buffeted them so. Their words were whipped away from their lips. Their breath was smothered, stifled, by the wind. They could only exchange long looks, and once, when the deck was momentarily deserted, he took her hand, and kissed it again and again with a gentleness and reverence that moved her as she thought nothing could have moved her again. Perhaps she would now not only cease to be bored—perhaps she would even be happy. She and Carlo were so much alike. They both needed love. Love, in fact, was to them of paramount importance. She looked upon this journey of theirs as a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage to the shrine of love. She said the words over and over to herself.

The wind cut through cloth and fur and silk. It cut through the best and warmest ulster that money could buy. Carlo shivered, and tried to draw his coat more closely about him.

"You're frozen, you poor boy," she cried. "Here, take part of my rug. How selfish I am. Nonsense, Carlo, you must. It will cover us both."

For a while it did cover them both. Then Carlo moved once or twice, and somehow the rug no longer covered Lily. She tried with gentle little tugs to pull it over her again, but he seemed to have

got it under him in such a way that she couldn't move it. He appeared not to notice that there was anything amiss, and she made up her mind to say nothing. Poor fellow, he felt the cold more than she did. That was doubtless owing to his southern blood. She tucked her feet up under her fur coat. Oh, this hateful wind! This abominably heaving sea. Ugh! That was a nasty, sickening roll. Really, they ought to run ocean liners like the *Mauretania* or the *Olympic* across the Channel, instead of these cockle-shell boats. The Channel was quite as bad and as dangerous as any Cape Hatteras or any Bay of Biscay.

"Carlo."

"Dearest lady?"

"You're not feeling ill, are you?"

"I am not feeling very well. I am cursing to myself this hellish Channel, and this worse than hellish wind. I have never known a rougher crossing."

"We're not half way over yet," she reminded him.

He made no answer.

As he did not speak at all after that, she presently leaned nearer to him, and gently pulled aside the coat collar that hid his face. He looked very pale, and his eyes were closed.

"Poor boy," she said. "I'm feeling perfectly miserable, too. I simply daren't look at the sea."

But these facts seemed not to interest him.

Now they were being showered with spray, light at first, but soon uncomfortably heavy and stinging. Her lips tasted of salt. The deck grew wetter, the water ran this way and that as the boat rolled. A sailor came and made their chairs fast, and advised the lower deck, or the saloon.

"You're in for a wetting if you stay here, ma'am."

"Are there really no cabins left?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I tried to get one for a lady on the lower deck, but they're all occupied. Most of 'em have been booked for days."

She closed her eyes, and the sailor went away. A wave of terrifying dimensions struck the side of the boat, and she cried out.

"Carlo! That wave soaked me to the skin. I believe I've got most of it in my lap. What shall we do?"

He made no answer. He rose suddenly out of his chair, and said in a strange voice:

"I am ill. I must go away now."

She watched him disappear with reeling gait. She started up as if to follow him, but sank down

in her chair again. She felt too ill to move. If she went below she would give in completely. Better stay here, she thought, and get wet. . . .

At least she had the rug to herself now. She tried to wrap herself in it, but the wind tore it out of her hands. The sailor, seeing her difficulties, came toward her again.

"You'd best go below, ma'am. It'll be worse before we get to Calais. They'll be turning everybody off this deck soon."

She protested weakly, but he was firm. Cold, wet, and miserable, she let him guide her below.

"I don't know as I'd recommend the ladies' saloon now, ma'am," he said. "It's pretty full up."

"Oh, no, no! Nothing would make me go there. Just let me hold on to the rail here."

She held on. She saw no sign of Carlo. All about her were human beings reduced to their lowest denomination. Presently she, too, was so reduced. . . .

She recovered as the boat entered the harbor at last. She tidied herself as well as she could with the aid of her little pocket mirror; she powdered her face, reddened her blue lips, and fastened her veil; then she walked around to the other side of the boat to look for Carlo.

She feared that he had been very ill indeed, poor

fellow. She at least recovered quickly. She decided that he must have gone below to the men's saloon. As the boat sidled into the dock where rows of blue-bloused French porters waited, shouting their numbers, the door of one of the private cabins opened, and Carlo emerged, looking pale still, but composed.

He saw her, started guiltily, smiled, and came toward her.

"You are all right? Good. What a crossing! I have been ill like a dog."

"You've at least been ill in private," she said coldly. "You seem to have found a cabin for yourself, although you couldn't find one for me."

He began to explain. He had luckily caught sight of a man he knew emerging from it. The man was going below to have lunch. Lunch! Imagine it! He had asked if he might occupy the cabin in his absence. Obligingly his friend had said "Yes." It had saved his life. But for that, he would have been like one of these pigs here.

She said nothing. Not for worlds would she have told him, angry though she was, that she herself had been one of those pigs. She did not wish to call up before his eyes or before the eyes of any man, an unpleasing picture of herself.

"I'm used to being pampered, I suppose," she

said. "If it had been Dick he would have come up at once, and taken me to the cabin. He wouldn't have dreamed of occupying it himself."

He pleaded, humbly, for her indulgence.

"When a man is ill, he is not himself. He loses all thought of others. He loses self-respect, everything."

She told herself that perhaps it was true. He had been too miserable to think of anything but his own misery.

"We'll try to forget it all. I'm feeling almost myself again, aren't you? Let's have lunch at Calais before the train leaves. You can get delicious sôle at the station restaurant. And we'll have champagne. It will do us both good."

His face brightened. She forgave easily. Women who loved him had need of forgiveness. His reputation as a perfect lover was at stake, and he wished to uphold it as long as possible. He felt that it had already been slightly damaged.

"That is a good idea. But there is the Customs. Perhaps there will not be time for lunch."

"We must get through them as quickly as we can. I have nothing to declare. Have you?"

He was feeling much better. He looked at her with those magnificent dark eyes of his.

"I have much, so much, to declare; but in France that is not dutiable, thank God!"

They were standing by the gangway. She touched his arm lightly.

"Dear Carlo!"

They were not delayed unduly by the Customs officials. Having seen their hand luggage safely deposited on their reserved seats, they entered the restaurant, where they were greeted by the fat and genial head waiter, who knows well enough how delightful to the English palate is the first taste of French cooking.

"An omelet, then a sôle, very fresh, very good," he suggested. "And after . . . ? Just coffee after. Bien, madame. And to drink, monsieur?"

Carlo looked over the wine list. He pointed out his choice to the waiter without speaking.

"Bien, monsieur."

Lily took off her veil and unfastened her coat. The color had returned to her cheeks, and her eyes were clear and bright. She longed for the champagne to come. How good it would taste!

"I always look forward to this part of the journey," she said. "And the sôles here are divine."

"The exaggerations of the English," remarked Carlo, smiling, "amuse me. A sôle can be divine. What word then is left to describe the most perfect woman in all the world?"

"If you can still call me that a year from

now . . ." she murmured. "Oh, Carlo! One year of perfect love . . . isn't it infinitely better than twenty years of boredom? Why do people hesitate? People who feel as we do?"

"I do not ask for so little," he made answer. "I will ask for twenty years of love . . . with you."

They exchanged a wonderful look.

"After the divorce," she said, "we'll travel. We'll live on the Continent. I don't think England will see very much of Monsieur and Madame Morelli. Or do you prefer Signor and Signora Morelli?"

And when the champagne came, he raised his glass, and said, his dark eyes speaking volumes:

"To one—or twenty—years of love."

She drank. Then she put down her glass, frowning.

"Carlo! You've ordered sweet champagne!"

"But surely, Lily darling. I always order sweet champagne. I prefer it."

"Well, I don't. I hate it. It can't be too dry for me. Oh, no, I can't drink this. I ought to have told you. I forgot that we'd never dined together except at my house."

"I cannot understand the taste for dry champagne," he protested. "It is all wrong . . . artificial."

"I can't drink this. I think it's horrible. Send

for the waiter, Carlo. I'll have a small bottle of the kind I like. You might have asked me you know, dear, which kind I preferred." She looked about her. "Where is the waiter? Oh, there he is. Waiter! No, I'll ask him myself, Carlo."

She made her demands in fluent and excellent French. The waiter was also very fluent. He regretted very much indeed and very often, repeating himself *ad infinitum,* that there were no small bottles of the kind of champagne madame desired. Only the large bottles. He regretted it extremely. Should he bring a large bottle?

Lily frowned and hesitated. It seemed rather absurd to order a whole large bottle for herself. But she wanted champagne. Red or even white wine after such a crossing as they had just had was unthinkable. Anyway, it was Carlo's fault for not having asked her first. Dick would never have dreamed of not consulting her. She ordered a large bottle. Their first lunch together, she thought, was not going very well.

There was something ludicrous in the sight of a tall bottle of champagne standing beside each place. It might, Lily thought, be symbolic of something, but she was not quite sure what. Anyway, it was very expensive, but that was not her fault. Carlo, she observed, was a little inclined to be

sulky. If any one had the right to be pettish, she had. But she talked lightly, and tried to make this first meal together go off as well as possible. As a charming woman this was her duty, especially as her companion was not her husband. Carlo presently lost his sulkiness and apologized. They had been together—alone together—so little, and he had yet to learn a thousand things about her. She must forgive him if he could not always, at first, guess her tastes correctly. She said she forgave him, but all the time a thought lurked at the back of her mind that this sort of thing was very tiresome. If he hadn't known he ought to have asked. She was so used to being with Dick, who had a way of anticipating her wishes. . . .

In the train she began to realize that she had for some time been living on her nerves. She felt dreadfully tired. They were not alone in the compartment, and they could only talk guardedly, which seemed to her unprofitable, so she presently began to doze. The compartment was very hot, and even while half asleep she was conscious of being uncomfortably warm. Carlo's eyes were closed, so she did not wake him to ask him to open the window, but did it herself, lowering it very quietly. Presently she dozed again. She woke up feeling half suffocated, and looked at the window. It was tightly

shut again, and Carlo still appeared to be asleep. The man in the far corner was an Englishman. His own window was open at the top, and he was quietly reading a book. She let the window halfway down once more, less careful this time to make no noise. But now she was no longer sleepy. Through eyelids that seemed closed, but were not, she watched Carlo. She presently saw him move, shiver, and look angrily at the window. He leaned over, and pulled it up sharply with an indignant bang.

"I opened it, Carlo," she said. "I've opened it twice. It's too hot in here."

"Pardon, my dear Lily. I freeze when the window is open. There is a draft, as the other window is also open. But I will freeze if you like."

He was about to lower it again.

"No, no, leave it," she said. "It doesn't matter." She did not want to make a fuss. She did not want to talk at all, only to sit and think, with closed eyes, although sleep was never further from her. As the train neared Paris she leaned forward and touched his knee. He sat up with a start.

"Carlo, I've decided to go to the Crillon. There's sure to be a room. And then to-morrow we can make plans. You'll go to the Ritz, won't you?"

He looked at her narrowly, but smiled indulgently and tenderly.

"My dearest Lily, you must do as it pleases you to do. You are very tired, I can see that. Shall I call for you all the same at half-past eight, and take you to dinner? And to-morrow, as you say——"

"Oh, no, I'm too tired to dine out to-night. I'd rather dine in my room, quietly. I'll telephone to you in the morning. That will be best. After all, there's plenty of time to discuss what we mean to do."

He put her into a taxi at the Gare du Nord. He was solicitous and tender and loverlike. He said he could hardly bear this parting. But they had to-morrow and every to-morrow, and he adored her, he murmured, kissing her hands, as no woman had ever been adored before. Certainly, she thought, as she drove away surrounded by trunks and light luggage, his eyes were really wonderful, and of course he had the most perfect figure. All her friends thought so.

She was given a room at the Crillon, the last available room to be had that night, she was told, although one or two people were leaving the next day. After some difficulty, for she rarely unpacked a trunk, she found a tea gown, and put it on. She had dinner in her room, quietly, comfortably, and securely. After dinner she put a call through to

London. Dick would be at home now. She had left a note for him saying that her destination was uncertain, but that she would telegraph or telephone to him that evening. Yes, cunningly, she had left a loophole. . . .

The call came through in half an hour. The voice at the other end was faint at first, but soon she heard very distinctly.

"Dick, is that you? Yes, this is Lily. Dick, I've been very naughty. I had a frightful attack of nerves, and I felt I had to get away at once. So I just packed up and came to Paris. Yes. Yes, I know, perfectly beastly of me. But, Dick, I do feel better already, really. I was quite wrong about one thing, though. I thought I wanted to be alone, and now I find I don't. Can you come over and join me? Oh, you angel! I'm at the Crillon. You really will? To-morrow? Yes, I'll see to that. Dick, you are a darling. And for Heaven's sake bring Horton. I'm lost without her. Where? I don't care. Anywhere. Spain? Oh, heavenly! You forgive me, do you, Dick? I'm going to be so good, you won't know me. What's that? What made me . . . ? Oh, just . . . just little things. You know I always mind them the most. Good night, darling."

She got into bed, and lay there with the light on,

thinking. She would have to ring up Carlo in the morning, and tell him. He wouldn't make a fuss. He wouldn't say anything. He wouldn't dare. There was his pride, too. No, she had nothing to fear from him. She thought over the events of the day.

That awful Channel crossing! His lack of sympathy for her symptoms, his concern for his own. The incident of the rug; the affair of the cabin; and, a small thing, but perhaps most important of all, the champagne. And then the window . . . yes, the window, too. . . .

She supposed he might have been the perfect lover if she had given him the chance. Yes . . . perhaps. But all those little things had put her off completely. It was just as she had told Dick. Little things . . . she was growing very sleepy . . . the rug, the champagne, the window. . . .

She turned out the light. She felt soothed and rested and deliciously drowsy. Outside, Paris was just a murmur. Here it was peaceful, and so comfortable. Even her soul, that little, little soul of hers, felt comfortable. She dozed off, an arm under her head. Soon she was sound asleep.

The Fatal Woman

I

IT was Creevy Lucas—"Creepy" Lucas he was called at Cambridge, because of his interest in psychic things—who brought them together. They were staying, he and Olney, at the same house in Gloucestershire at the time, and some impulse made Lucas suggest to the younger man that he go with him that afternoon.

"Small political meetings aren't very amusing," he said, "unless you're interested in the people concerned. But do come and cheer my friend Mrs. Cheniston. She's speaking in the Corn Exchange this afternoon, and a few warm partisans at the back of the hall may help matters."

"Do you think Cheniston will get in?" asked Olney, not greatly interested.

"I'm pretty certain he will. Do come. I think you'll enjoy hearing her. She's one of the best women speakers I've heard."

It was only half an hour's run in the car to Axeter; it was too wet to shoot with any comfort,

and nothing else except bridge offered itself, so Olney went. The Corn Exchange was already full when they arrived, but they pushed their way in and stood at the back of the hall. Chairs were presently brought to them, but Olney preferred standing because he could see better. His eyes searched out Mrs. Cheniston on the platform, and as soon as she stood up to speak he was enthralled. He thought her, the moment her face became animated, the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She had what he considered few women possess nowadays, for all that they take such a large part in public affairs, a presence. Sitting still she was well worth looking at, but on her feet, speaking, exercising that extraordinary personal magnetism of hers, he found her fascinating.

She was plainly dressed in brown tweed with a brightly colored handkerchief or scarf at her throat. She stood, she moved, superbly; she spoke fluently and amusingly.

Olney said to himself, "What a wife for a politician!"

Lucas, he observed, was listening no less attentively, but he remained seated, smiling from time to time at what she said, clapping vigorously, or pounding on the floor with his stick when she said anything that particularly pleased him.

Olney heard little of Cheniston's speech, which followed. He saw him get to his feet, a tall, lean man with a face that he thought would look well under a barrister's wig. But he could think of nothing but Mrs. Cheniston, and her vivid face, and of the things she said.

He watched her as she sat listening to her husband. A heckler at the back of the hall called out a question, and as Cheniston hesitated, searching his mind for the best answer, she sprang to her feet and answered it herself, apologizing to her husband immediately after with a charming grace for doing so, and in the laughter that followed this little episode she sat down again. It was a peaceful enough meeting. It was clear that the majority were with the speakers, and when it was over the crowd went quietly out, without any rowdyism, and Lucas led Olney to the back of the hall, where the Chenistons were waiting to talk to some of their friends. It was not the moment for an introduction, and Olney did not hope for it, the crowd was too great. But he stood near enough to Mrs. Cheniston to hear her say:

"Bring any friends you like on Thursday night, and we'll celebrate our victory."

The election—it was a by-election—was on a Thursday, and Olney made up his mind that he

wanted very much to go. He caught a glimpse of Cheniston's face and it struck him that he looked haggard, overtired. Mrs. Cheniston's face, on the contrary, made him think of a tiger lily. She was one of those dark, glowing women who are invariably compared to that tawny flower.

As they drove back to his aunt's house, where they were staying, Olney asked Lucas if he intended going to Stone House, where the Chenistons lived, on Thursday evening, and if he did, might he go, too? Lucas was delighted.

"I want you to meet Beatrice," he said. "She's the dearest of dears, and a marvelous woman, I think, in every way. We'll dine first and go there about half-past nine."

He added that he, too, had been struck by the paleness of Cheniston's face.

"I'm afraid he's overdoing it," he said. "He's one of the ablest barristers we have; he's written three notable books on law, and I can't help feeling that it's a pity, in a way, that he should have taken this on, too. In my opinion, when a man takes a seat in the House of Commons he shortens his life appreciably. But, of course, we want such men as Cheniston in politics. We need them."

Olney observed that Cheniston had risen to the top in a remarkably short time.

"Ah, well, that's partly because he has Beatrice to help him," said Lucas. "She's ambitious for him, because she's so proud of him."

"She must be remarkably clever."

"Oh, clever!" exclaimed Lucas with almost boyish enthusiasm, "I should rather say she was. She makes a man want to do his utmost. And Cheniston, of course, adores her. They are very, very happy. But, then, she would have made any intelligent, appreciative man happy, I think."

He seemed to take a delight in talking about her, and Olney was delighted to listen. The two men sat in opposite corners of the car as it sped home in the October dusk, and the lovely, glowing face of Mrs. Cheniston was present to both of them. She was so vital, so vivid, it was impossible not to think of her.

"I often say to myself," went on Lucas, "that there is nothing she lacks. You see, I know her so well; I've known her so long. She has beauty, brains, character, charm, vitality"—he made a gesture with his hands—"everything."

Olney, looking at Lucas's fine profile against the car window, thought: "If it were anyone but Creevy Lucas I would say he was in love with her."

But he knew Creevy Lucas too well. He was a man who made, where he himself was concerned,

no compromises with virtue. And Olney knew that while he might permit himself to love and admire his old friend Beatrice Wilton, he would never permit himself to be in love with Mrs. Cheniston.

Fred Olney's aunt, Mrs. Brierly, was an old lady, many years widowed. She liked her nephew to come and bring his friends for the shooting, and as long as she had her bridge four after dinner she was delighted that every one should do as he or she pleased. So on Thursday evening Lucas and Olney left the house in Olney's two-seater shortly after nine. It was a sharp, clear night, the sky bossed with bright, metallic stars, and the car hummed pleasantly along the hard, even road. Olney was in high spirits. He was going to meet Mrs. Cheniston, whose face had hardly been out of his thoughts for days. But Lucas was far from gay. He was depressed, and for this depression he apologized to Olney.

"Pay no attention to me, Fred," he said. "I'm gloomy to-night, for some reason. I feel as though people were whispering bad news all about me, news that I can't quite catch."

But he grew more cheerful when the lights of Stone House appeared. They were very gay there that evening; the house was full of guests; the news had just come that Cheniston had been elected by

a comfortable majority, and every one, said Norland, the old butler, as he admitted them, was excited and pleased. They were taken at once into the dining room, where they drank Cheniston's health. The women had just left the table, and so Olney did not see Mrs. Cheniston until after the dreadful thing had happened.

There was no one there who failed to notice—or so each one said afterwards—how quiet Guy Cheniston was, and how deep the lines were about his mouth. He looked more than tired, he looked exhausted; more exhausted, Lucas thought, than it was good for a man to look. He sat beside him, and, putting a hand on his arm, told him how happy he was that everything had gone so well. Cheniston covered his hand with his own for an instant, and thanked him. Then he rose, smiling, to respond to the cries of "Speech, Cheniston, speech!"

"My speech," he said, "my first speech as the Member for North Hilton, will be very short, and very much to the point. For my success to-day I have to thank one of the best speakers, and certainly the most enthusiastic, untiring and able helper I have ever known—my wife!"

He raised his glass amid a chorus of voices. And then Olney, staring, saw his face turn gray, saw it take on a look of surprise, such a look as a

man might wear who has just been told that Moses and all the prophets were standing under the lime trees in his garden—an incredulous, amazed look. Then he set his glass down slowly and shakily, without ever having touched it to his lips, clutched at the edge of the table with both hands, and, still with that look of surprise on his face, reeled sideways and fell. Lucas tried to catch him, but he was not quick enough. He slipped through his grasp and was on the floor, clutching at his side. He made a convulsive movement, cried out something, and then was completely still and silent, his head resting on Lucas's arm.

"For God's sake," cried Lucas, "go for Beatrice!"

It was Olney who went; why, he couldn't afterwards have explained, as there were old friends present, but some strong impulse sent him bolting from the room, into the hall, and in the direction of laughter and women's voices. They were all gathered in the drawing room, the women, a bright group against the painted walls. They were drinking coffee, and Mrs. Cheniston, whom his eyes immediately discovered among the others, stood by the fire, her beautiful arms upraised as she placed an empty cup on the high mantel.

"That's what I told Guy yesterday," she was

saying. "Nowadays, the women's vote is as important as the men's. And yet everybody seems to ignore the fact that—" And then she saw Olney.

"Mrs. Cheniston—please come into the dining room. I'm afraid your husband is ill."

She placed him, she recognized him at once, he saw that. Her dark eyes widened as she grasped what his errand there was. She asked no questions, she made no sound, but ran past him and ahead of him into the dining room.

They had not lifted Cheniston from the floor. They had found brandy useless, for life had already gone; so he lay as he had fallen, his head on Lucas's supporting arm. As Mrs. Cheniston bent over him, putting an ear to his heart, slipping her hand inside the open shirt front, Lucas's eyes met Olney's over her head with a look of tragic hopelessness.

"But—he's dead!" she cried, withdrawing her hand and staring up into their faces. "He's dead."

"They've gone for the doctor," Lucas said. "But, Beatrice, I'm afraid——"

"Guy!" she cried, just once, close to his ear. She took her husband's head, that striking iron-gray head, between her hands, and as Lucas got up, she let it sink gently down to a cushion that somebody offered her. Then she stood upright. Lucas, ap-

palled, stricken with the awfulness of it, put a pitiful arm about her.

"He got up to drink your health, Beatrice," he said, "and as he was putting the glass to his lips he reeled and fell. His heart simply gave out."

The others stood near with white, miserable faces, and one or two of the women came forward with broken words. She looked from one to the other of them, and then her eyes fixed themselves on Olney, who had brought her the news.

"But—it's impossible!" she cried. "Impossible! It can't be! Guy? It can't be. Why, this is—this is impossible." Her voice rose, and there was no other sound in the room. "I can't stand here and just *endure* this. I must *do* something. Creevy! What can I do? What can I do?"

The women pressed closer to her, and tears were on their faces. But she didn't want them near her. She pushed them away in a sort of frenzy. She seemed maddened by her own helplessness. For once in her active life she couldn't do anything. There was nothing, nothing whatever for her to do.

II

Three people were walking bareheaded in the garden. It was a cloudy summer day, warm and rather oppressive. An ugly house, built at a time

when morals were so rigid and so uncompromising that they crushed out of existence their lovely, wayward sister, Taste, frowned down upon them from narrow, cold-looking windows.

But the gardens were pleasant, and General Hinkson, who had arrived a few hours earlier, was glad that he had come, even for a short stay of twenty-four hours—positively all the time he could spare. He was glad to see Olney again, and glad to find that he had married such a particularly attractive and agreeable woman.

He had enjoyed his lunch, and was now enjoying a cigar that was beyond criticism. During lunch they had talked of topics of general interest, of mutual friends, but now the General looked about him and surveyed the house and its surroundings with the appraising but unæsthetic eye of an auctioneer, for he was a pushing, ambitious man, whose life had been wholly devoted to getting on in his profession.

"Very fine place you have here," he observed with a gesture, cigar in hand.

"Now just what do you mean by 'fine,' General?" asked Mrs. Olney, laughing. "Do you mean beautiful, imposing, or merely large? Because Fred and I think it's the most hideous place in England."

Not at all defeated, the General answered,

"Well, since you ask me, perhaps when I say 'fine,' I mean large."

"Ah, there you're quite right. You know, of course, why we took it?"

"Took it? No. I thought it was your own."

"Good Heavens, no. Our own place, Stone House, is in Gloucestershire." She threw out an arm, moving it in a half-circle. "When you look to the right and the left of you, what do you see?"

"Good, flat, open farming country," he said. "And a thing that looks like a small hangar in that far field."

"That's exactly what it is," she told him.

"I'm doing some experimental work here," explained Fred Olney. "That's why we took this place, because of the flat, open country all around it."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed the General, "this is good news indeed. We all took it very badly when you left the shop"—he referred to the Air Ministry—"I've always said that if there was one man we could look to for improvements and new ideas, that man was you. A lot of these fellows," he said, turning to Mrs. Olney, "seem to think the last word's been said on the subject of flying—or you might think so, to hear them talk. I'm very glad to hear this, Olney."

"Well," said Fred Olney, "you must thank my wife. If it hadn't been for her, I'd have become a farmer. I'd made up my mind, before I married, that I'd done with flying forever, and with everything connected with flying."

"Which was madness," cried Beatrice Olney. "If there's ever another war, which God forbid, it's no good pretending that it will be fought on the ground, or on the water, or even under the water, because it won't. It will be fought up there." She pointed toward the low, gray clouds. "And Fred's an absolute genius in all matters concerning flying. He's too valuable to be wasted, isn't he?" she demanded, turning to General Hinkson.

"Oh, I've always said it, my dear lady. I've said time and again, 'If there's a man in all England who's really capable of improving the Service, that man's Fred Olney'."

Mrs. Olney, walking between the two men, made a gesture with both hands. She was a woman who had to make use of gestures because she had so much to say, she felt so much. There was so much in her to which to give expression that gestures were necessary to her.

"Safety!" she said, and paused there on the lawn to give emphasis to her words. "If Fred can only help to make flying safer, I shall be a proud woman.

It's the most important thing in the world to-day. Speed, height, weight-carrying—all those things are of minor consequence compared to safety. The thing we need now is greater security in the air; a narrower margin for accidents. And that's where, I think, Fred can help."

"I've been making some experiments just lately," said Olney in his quiet way, "that are really rather interesting. I think I'm on the track of one or two things that may prove useful. When I get further along, some of you fellows must come down from London and have a look. I'm working on a new glider, too," he said, "and that's great sport. Presently, if you like, we'll go over to the shed, and I'll show her to you."

He went into technical details as they walked, and Mrs. Olney walked close beside him, listening, an arm through his arm. The General smoked and nodded, and asked questions from time to time. Occasionally he exchanged glances of intense satisfaction and approval with Mrs. Olney.

"If I'd had a wife like her," he thought, "I'd have been Air Minister by now."

The next afternoon, when he had gone, Mrs. Olney was again walking and talking in the garden with her husband. She was well satisfied with the General's visit.

"He's gone back to London full of enthusiasm, Fred," she said. "He hasn't an atom of real intelligence himself, but he's keen on his job, and he'll be useful." Then she added, with a quick and surprising change of mood:

"Fred, tell me, am I a managing woman? I do recognize brains and talents, and I can't bear seeing them go to waste. And I am so very proud of you. . . ."

He cut her short, indignantly.

"My darling . . . managing! You're the most marvelous woman in the world! Don't you suppose I know how much I need a push now and then? I never had an ounce of personal ambition till I married you. I only wanted to enjoy life. Well, you've taught me that the two things aren't incompatible."

She smiled at him and pressed his arm.

"Nothing could make me believe that you haven't been happy these two years," she said, in a low voice "Happier than you've ever been in your life. I know it."

"Thank God you do know it, Beatrice," he said, "for I haven't the words to tell you."

Trees sheltered them from the house, and for a few seconds they were in each other's arms. Then, smiling, they moved on. They crossed the lawn,

arm in arm and hand in hand, a splendid couple. It seemed to him that energy, purpose, vitality, flowed through her like an electric current into him. His own love seemed to him as natural as the upward growth of a tree. Her love for him seemed to him a daily miracle, ever fresh and amazing. They walked slowly, their fingers interlocked, keeping step and talking in low, happy voices. The sun, coming out, drew bright flashes from the windows of the hangar.

"Let's walk to the shed," she suggested, "and look at the glider."

They went through a gate in a wall and crossed a wide, green field, still hand in hand.

III

"She's the most remarkable woman," Creevy Lucas was saying to his friend Edward Wendell, "that I have ever known."

"Very fascinating, I should think," said the other. He was very curious about, and had never yet met, Lucas's friend, Mrs. Olney.

"Oh, fascinating!" Lucas smiled, lifted those intensely blue eyes of his and looked about him. They were sitting in that drawing room with painted walls of green from which Mrs. Olney had been abruptly summoned by Olney to her husband's

side. "This room is so astoundingly *hers* that I sometimes imagine she's just behind my chair, or sitting at her writing-desk over there, or about to come into the room. To-night especially, I don't know why."

"I wonder," said Edward Wendell, who had a great respect for his friend's flashes of prescience, "why to-night especially?"

"I don't know. But I've seen her so often, sitting at that desk. . . ."

"It's a charming one, too."

"That's her favorite period, early eighteenth century."

"It must be a great joy to be lent such a house as this," said Wendell. "Did you ever come here when her first husband was alive?"

"Oh, yes. Guy Cheniston was a dear friend of mine. You see, I've known her since she was seventeen."

"Well, if I were to marry a widow," observed Wendell, "I don't think I should care to live in the first husband's house. I should feel more like a consort than a husband."

"But it wasn't Cheniston's house. It's her own house, left to her by her father, as there were no sons."

"I see. Still, that makes it all the more. . . ."

"But, why not? Give up a lovely place like this? Why should she?"

"She could let it."

"But she didn't want to. Cheniston had a house in town, and they divided their time between the two. Olney had no place of his own. He loves it here."

"How long have they been married?"

"It's nearly three years, but it seems like yesterday. Poor Olney! . . . I don't know why I say 'Poor Olney,' except that one's always sorry, in a way, for a man who falls so desperately in love."

Just then Norland, Mrs. Olney's butler, came into the room with whiskey and soda and glasses on a tray. He set the tray down, turned a long and equine face—but agreeably equine, like the face of a patient and intelligent horse—toward Lucas, and said:

"Will there be anything further to-night, sir?"

"Nothing more, thank you, Norland. You can lock up now. Mr. Wendell and I will breakfast at nine."

"Old Norland," mused Lucas when he had gone. "I've known him for sixteen years, and we've never yet discussed anything but the war, politics, the crops, and the weather. I know no more about his

real life and his real feelings than I did at first. I like him; I respect him. I'm sure I should respect his feelings and opinions if I knew what they were. I'd like to know what he thinks about God and the devil and love and predestination. But if I asked him I don't suppose he could, or would, tell me."

"Any more," said Wendell, "than I could." He added, "I suppose he's devoted to Mrs. Olney."

"Oh, yes, they all are."

"And this second marriage of hers. Is it a success?"

"Very much so. But, then, she is what I call an accomplished wife. She has a genius for married life. Yes, you may smile, Edward, but it's a gift. And she has it. This house—perfect. Her management, her tact, her servants, her clothes, her talk—and I dare to say it because one knows these things instinctively—her love, perfect."

He looked at Wendell and smiled.

"You might think," he said, "that I am in love with her myself. Well, perhaps I am, but so, I judge, is every man who knows her." He leaned his head against the back of his chair and looked upward, toward the ceiling, and then he said as though he were speaking to God, "She is the most lovable woman I have ever known."

Wendell, who would have died for Lucas, was

moved by the depth of feeling his friend displayed. He had always longed to see him marry, but he felt he knew now why he had never married, and why, in all probability, he never would marry. He had suspected it for many years, but friendship between men does not necessarily mean a sharing of confidences. And as he did not wish to take advantage of his friend's self-revealing mood lest tomorrow he might regret it, he changed the subject and spoke of other things. He led Lucas to talk of the thing that interested him most, psychical research, and asked him if he had gone on with his investigations since his illness.

"No," said Lucas, "I haven't. Of course, it still interests me more than anything else, but I felt I had been too absorbed in it—that I was getting one-sided. So I've left it alone for the present. I tell myself that I've gone as far as I shall ever go. Not that I'm afraid of it. I think, approached by well-balanced, normal minds in a scientific spirit, it can't possibly be harmful, but after my illness . . ."

"You were wise, I think."

"Oh, well," said Lucas, "wise, perhaps, and yet —I don't know. Doubtless Olney would be *wise* to give up his flying, but flying will never be made safer for future generations if men like Olney stop experimenting. And science will never shed light

on death and on the life after death if the men whose work it is to investigate these things slacken their efforts."

His finely modeled, rather austere face took on a sad look, but only for an instant. Then he smiled, and got up from his chair. He stood with his back to the wood fire that sentiment rather than the cold had made them light, and said:

"However, I'm not going to worry about that to-night. I feel, if not actually *happy,* full of the expectation of happiness. I've felt it all day. I can't account for it."

"As though somebody," suggested Wendell, in order to draw him out, "were about to die and leave you a fortune?"

"It's as though . . ." Lucas hesitated, "as though I were about to come into my own. That's vague, but the feeling is even more vague." He tossed away the end of his cigar. "Well, to bed."

"To bed," echoed Wendell, springing up, "we've all day to-morrow to talk."

"Help yourself to a drink," said Lucas. "I don't think I want one. Hello. Listen." He stood motionless. "Is that the wind, or——?"

Wendell, too, paused and listened, his hand on the syphon. His face, like Lucas's face, was turned toward the window. Out of the night, car-

ried on the wind, came a vibration—it was no more at first—the shaking particles of which came together presently and made a continuous sound, a hum. The hum grew louder. They had been speaking of flying, and Wendell's first thought was that they were listening to the sound of an aeroplane, but he soon knew, beyond a doubt, that it was no aëroplane, but a motor, traveling fast. It had reached the gates now, and was entering the drive. Lights flashed, theatrically, through the drawn blinds, and then with a harsh rattling of gravel, like the noise a powerful retreating wave makes on a pebbly beach, the car swung round the curve of the drive and stopped with astonishing suddenness at the door.

Lucas's face had grown very white. He went out of the room and into the hall, and in ten long strides was at the door. There was a noise of bolts shot back, of keys turning gratingly, then the door, creaking a little, was flung open. Wendell, still standing by the tray, heard the heightened noise of the wind in the trees outside, and heard a low cry. He was about to put down his glass untouched, but a shiver as of cold went up his spine, and he tossed the drink down quickly and then turned to follow Lucas.

But even as he crossed the room, the mistress of

that room, she whose presence there Lucas had felt so keenly, entered it, Lucas behind her.

Her entrance was, to Wendell, the most dramatic thing and the most ominous thing that he had ever seen. What her presence there meant, at that hour of the night, he had no idea, but he knew, for her face told him, that it meant some overwhelming tragedy. Lightning, he thought, looking at her, can and does strike twice in the same place. It had struck here, and struck again, but it had not killed. It had not even numbed. She was more terribly alive, he thought, than any woman he had ever seen. She seemed to vibrate, like a harp over which a hand has just been drawn. Her uncommon beauty heightened the effect of drama her entrance gave. She was ablaze with feeling, with passion, with a resentfulness so violent that it could not find expression. Her dark and splendid eyes looked as though they saw unspeakable things—things that her will was still forcing her to look upon. She was unconscious of Wendell's presence. She turned toward Lucas and moved her shoulders so that her heavy fur coat fell open and slipped down, and Lucas took it from her, saying in a low voice, the tender, troubled voice that a father might use to a child:

"Beatrice, Beatrice! Tell me, what is it?"

She was breathing quickly and painfully, as though she had been trying to run away from some pursuing terror. She moistened her lips, and Wendell saw a movement in her throat. Then:

"He's dead!" she cried, and her voice rang out horribly in the quiet room. "Early this morning he went up in the glider, and at nine I found him dead. He got caught in the trees; he came down through the trees . . . I found him." She put her hands over her eyes, shuddering, and as Lucas, with a cry of pity and of pain, went to her she flung them out as though to keep him back. "Oh, don't pity me; I didn't come for pity. I don't want pity. Oh, what a world this is! All loose, broken ends, all broken things, broken hopes. Yesterday we were so happy, and now he's broken and dead. Dead!" She put her arm across her face and moaned.

Lucas put an arm about her shoulders and steadied her. His face was white and drawn, and his eyes looked intensely blue.

"Oh, Beatrice! My dear, what is there I can say, or do? My dear, my poor, poor girl!"

Wendell stood quietly in the shadows, beyond the soft light the lamps shed. Better to stay, he thought, than tiptoe out of the room like a man with no heart. He suffered for her, although she hardly knew that he was there.

"Let me talk," she cried, and her voice sounded hollow, and wild. "They brought him in, Creevy, and he looked . . . he looked like a knight . . . and there was a smile on his face. Oh, they can smile, because they've left this hideous, vile world, where everything gets broken. This damned world! Oh!" Her cry chilled Wendell to the bone. "What's it all for? There's no sense in it, there's no sense in it! Fred, Fred!"

Lucas stood like a rock, steadying her.

"My poor girl!" he said, barely above a whisper.

"Can you pretend to me any longer," she demanded passionately, "that there's a plan, a purpose in all this? I tell you this whole universe is nothing but a practical joke, or else a hideous accident, from which we can only extricate ourselves by death."

"No, no," said Lucas. "No, no, my dear. You know it's not that."

She went on, and the anguish in her voice was terrible to Wendell.

"If you'd seen what I've seen to-day—oh, God! I couldn't stay in the house, Creevy. I was going mad. I ran out and got into the car, and drove and drove all day like the madwoman I was, and then suddenly I saw familiar trees and fields, and just as it got dark I found myself only a few miles

from home. And I knew I wanted to see you, Creevy. . . . Oh, why can't I cry? I only feel rage, rage."

Her dark eyes blazed, and she clenched and unclenched her hands.

"What's life given to us for?" she cried. "What's it given to us for, Creevy, if it's not to do work in? To try to increase the knowledge of this hateful world, or better it in some way. And just when you think you're on the threshold, death comes senselessly, like a mad bull, and smashes everything. And we must bow our heads and call it the hand of God. I won't, I won't. I see no sense in it, no plan, no mind."

"My dear," Lucas said gently, "no one can see the plan. No one does understand the mind."

"So you say. So you've always said. But why, *why,* shouldn't we understand?" He was about to speak, but she stopped him. He saw that she must talk or go mad. "Wait, wait. If you'd seen what I've seen this morning . . . his face was untouched. I thank God for that one thing. It's all I have to be thankful for. He was smiling . . . but, oh, Creevy, Creevy, what was in his mind when he fell? Do you think he blamed me? That's what I want to know. It was I who persuaded him to take up flying again. It was so important, I felt,

so terribly important. Fred knew more than any of them. He was full of ideas. Was I wrong to urge him to go on? Tell me, for God's sake, tell me."

"I think not, Beatrice. I think you were brave and right."

"But did *he* think that, just then? Just at that moment? That's what's driving me nearly mad."

She turned suddenly toward Wendell with a sort of despairing ferocity. She had, then, been aware of him all the time, he thought.

"Did I do wrong?" she demanded. "Did I?"

"No," said Wendell, and his voice sounded strange in his own ears. "No, no."

"How am I to believe you?" she cried. "I must know, I must *know,* Creevy. What's the good of all your work if you can't tell me that? What's the good of all your research if you can't help me to find out what was in Fred's mind? What's in Fred's mind *now,* if there is a now?"

Lucas said, very quietly:

"I solemnly swear to you that I believe there is a now for Fred. That he exists at this moment more fully and freely than ever before."

"Ah, but that's not enough. You believe, but can you make me believe? Can you give me any *proof?* That's what I'm hungry for—what the

whole world is hungry for. I see now that it's the world's greatest need. And you've stopped trying to find out. You've given up the search. Why," she cried, turning to look in Lucas's face, "you were just on the brink of new discoveries perhaps. Oh, Creevy, go on, will you? For my sake, for Fred's sake, go on!"

There was a different light in her eyes now. Her face had changed. There was a gleam of hope in it. There was an answering light in Lucas's eyes and she saw it and seized his arm feverishly.

"Will you, Creevy? I beseech you, I beseech you. What else is there for me, or for any one like me, to hope for? I'll devote my life, my whole life, to helping you. Will you, will you?"

"I will," he said, and his eyes looked like blue crystals in his white face.

From that moment her terrible tension began to relax. Her arms dropped to her sides.

"I knew you would. I knew I could count on you. If you'll give me just the smallest atom of proof, Creevy, of hope . . ."

"I'll try, Beatrice," he said. "I would do anything in this world to help you."

All her fierce passion, her defiance, had left her.

"If there's anything, anything at all beyond this

life," she said, "you must help me to find it. If Fred isn't finished utterly, if he still exists . . ."

"I've promised, my dear," said Lucas.

A heaviness came over her eyelids.

"Ring for Norland," she said, in a voice that was no more than a whisper. "Oh, God, how tired I am! I must sleep for a little while. In the morning, early, I'll go—back."

She put out a hand. Lucas took it, and very slowly, with her face wearily averted, she let him lead her to the door. Away in some distant part of the house Wendell heard hurrying footsteps. The two went out into the hall to meet Norland, and Wendell caught a glimpse of his long, equine face, and behind him, the frightened face of Mrs. Norland, the cook. Bending over the fire, warming his hands, which, although it was a May evening, had grown very cold, he heard their low voices as they talked together.

It was Lucas who telephoned to the other house, where Fred lay, to say that she was safe. And in the early morning when she drove away, scattering the gravel of the drive under her wheels, Lucas was beside her, for he had offered to help her through the dreadful days. Wendell, from his window, saw her at the wheel, looking straight before her like the embodiment of will, of purpose,

of undying energy. And even from that distance the beauty of her set face moved him, for there are few things in this world that have such power to move as beauty.

And after he had breakfasted he went out and walked about the grounds, and everywhere he saw signs of her. The borders that she had planned gave rich promise of the loveliness that was to come. The garden, he thought, was like her house, like her furniture, perfect. And as he walked, his mind went back, and he recalled the talk they had had the night before, he and Lucas, and he thought how strange it was that while they had sat there speaking of her, Mrs. Olney had been tearing through the night toward them, sitting at her wheel like a Fury, driven by unbearable thoughts. Strange, too, that Lucas should have said, more than once, "Poor Olney!" without knowing why. But what was strangest of all, he thought, not seeing very clearly at that time, was that he should have had that unaccountable feeling of happiness to come; of being about, as he said, to "come into his own," when what was really impending was a ghastly tragedy.

With these thoughts in his mind he made a tour of the gardens, admiring pools and clipped yews, and finely spaced lawns, and then returned, still

thoughtful and depressed with Mrs. Olney's grief, to the house and to his own room where he had left Norland packing his things.

He saw that the old butler's eyes were very red, and that he tried to keep that kindly, equine face turned from him. Naturally, thought Wendell, he was grieving. Both for Mrs. Olney's sorrow and for Olney. It would have been strange if he were not.

"What a tragedy, Norland," he said, with some idea of comforting the old man in his trouble. "What a ghastly tragedy it is!"

And then Norland, the real Norland spoke. He raised a face in which it seemed to Wendell that he saw a knowledge too egregious to be borne alone. And so he spoke what was in his mind, for the moment had come—and would pass quickly enough —when he could no longer keep his thoughts to himself.

"I liked and admired Mr. Cheniston, sir," he said, and his voice was rough with emotion, "and I liked poor Mr. Olney very, very much indeed." And then his next words illuminated the future for Wendell in one white flash, so that he saw coming events all clear, like a map. "But, sir, I like Mr. Lucas better, yes, even better, than any of them. That's why I feel so terribly . . . so terribly . . .

I beg pardon, sir. You won't understand what I mean, of course. . . ."

His voice broke, and he said no more. His moment had come and gone. He closed Wendell's dressing-bag with a snap and carried it out of the room and down the stairs, looking neither to the right nor to the left. And Wendell remained standing in the doorway of his room, his mind busy with that inference, and a sort of dread stealing into his heart.

Hedda Speaks

MELVILLE ADDISON was what a previous generation—less accustomed to rapidly made fortunes—would have called a self-made man, and what the present generation merely calls a successful one. By the time he was forty-four he had made all the money he considered necessary for the thirty or so remaining years of his life, had been happily married, but had lost his wife during an influenza epidemic, and had crossed eight times to Europe.

He was now crossing for the ninth time, and, as usual, alone. His home was in the pretty, rural country near Greenwich, Connecticut, and from his wooded hilltop he could see the pleasant waters of Long Island Sound. Believing that for a man to retire from business without a hobby to interest him was to shorten his life by years, he began to fill his house with works of art, hunted down, personally inspected, and, if deemed worthy, purchased by himself.

He made mistakes, but he kept his good humor.

He once bought on Fifth Avenue a Guardi that had been painted by a clever young Italian copyist in an attic in Verona the year before. It was a long time before he discovered this, but when he did he only laughed. The picture remained on his wall, where he had hung it in pride and delight.

"An expensive but decorative mistake," he said, with a wave of his hand, "but luckily for these smart young fellows there's a fool born every minute."

He was a sociable, friendly man, popular, agreeable to look at, and fond of mixing with his kind. It was his opinion, frequently expressed, that you could learn something from everybody. What he learned from Mr. Henry Ostrander on that ninth voyage across the Atlantic changed his whole life.

He sat next to a man named Warner in the dining saloon, and fell into talk with him at the first meal. Warner was a quiet man, with pleasant manners and thoughtful eyes. He had read a good deal, but knew nothing about pictures, and it was his first trip abroad. Nevertheless, Melville Addison found him very companionable. He particularly wanted, he said, to see the cathedrals of Europe, especially of England and France. Addison said he would like to show him Canterbury, and they agreed to go there together, but owing to the following events this trip never materialized.

On the third day, after lunch, the two men were sitting side by side in their deck chairs. Warner had a book of poems in his hand which he opened from time to time, but for the most part they talked, or made comments on the people who were passing and re-passing them. A small man in a gray overcoat went by, walking briskly. There was nothing remarkable about his appearance in any way, but Warner saw him and started.

"That's Henry Ostrander," he exclaimed, "as sure as I'm alive."

"Who's he?' Addison very naturally asked.

"You've never heard of him, I suppose. Lots of people haven't. He's the greatest, or one of the greatest mediums we've got. I went to one of his séances in New York only six months ago. But I don't suppose," he added, "you take any interest in this spiritualistic business."

"I don't know. Not actively, anyhow. Do you?"

Warner hesitated, watching the retreating figure of the man in the gray overcoat.

"Yes, to a certain extent, I do. I was taken to two of his séances by a friend. . . . I'd always wanted to go to Ostrander's, if I went to any. I went with a perfectly open, unprejudiced mind, and I must say I was very much impressed."

"What's his line, exactly?"

"Oh, the usual sort of thing, I suppose. He goes into a trance, and certain—spirits—I don't know what else to call them—get possession of him and talk."

"Did they say anything worth listening to?"

"Well, that depends on what you mean. Some of the people there seemed to get in touch with their relations and friends. Names were called, and messages given. I can't say that struck me as altogether convincing. I can see how mind-reading might enter into that. What amazed me were the things that were prophesied."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, what he said, or his control said, about things that were going to happen to people present."

"Did any of them come true?"

"Yes, that's the queer part of it. His favorite control, a Swedish girl, took quite a flattering interest in me. She said that my aunt—she gave her Christian name—was going to die very suddenly, and strangely enough she was killed in a motor accident about ten days later; and she said I was thinking of lending a large sum of money to a friend to invest, and that I'd lose it, and sure enough I did lend it, like a fool, and I did lose it. She said a number of other things I can't remember now, but they were all true."

"That's extraordinary," said Addison. "What sort of a fellow is this Ostrander?"

"He seems very normal. He dresses, eats, talks, exactly like any one else. He has a very nice wife, and a young son. I went there twice. There were some materializations the second time. I don't pretend to understand it. But I know that Ostrander is as well known in England as he is in America, and I believe has submitted willingly to every sort of test."

"Could you introduce me?" Addison asked. "I've never met a medium. I'd like to talk to him."

"Surely. When he comes round again I'll speak to him."

When Ostrander appeared again Warner sprang up from his deck-chair and spoke to him. He had to introduce himself, as Ostrander clearly did not remember him. Then Melville Addison was introduced—"A friend of mine who is particularly anxious to make your acquaintance," Warner said, and with a smile and nod to Addison he went away and left the two together.

Ostrander was a thin, gray-haired man with prominent cheek-bones and deep-set blue eyes. He was small, and his hands and feet were small, but at the same time he gave the impression of being

muscular and healthy. He had a very agreeable smile.

"Mr. Warner," said Addison, as, at Ostrander's invitation, he joined him in his walk, "has just been telling me about you. What he said interested me so much that I asked him to introduce me to you."

"That was very kind of him and of you," said Ostrander. "It was stupid of me not to remember him, but so many people, both in England and America, come to my meetings that I'm sorry to say I often forget their faces until I know them well."

"Are you an American?" Addison inquired.

"I am a naturalized American. I was born in London, of Swedish parents, and I went to America when I was little more than a child. I have a flat in London, though, near Dorset Square, as well as one in New York."

He spoke with simplicity and frankness, and Addison, who had a certain shrewdness or intuitiveness in regard to people, "took to" him at once.

"What interests me," he said, "isn't so much the fact—I'm assuming it's a fact—that we can get into touch with the so-called dead, as that when you're in a state of trance you, or your control, can foretell the future. Warner says that everything that was told to him came true."

"Ah, that was Hedda, I expect. She hardly ever makes mistakes."

"Who is Hedda?"

"Hedda is my Swedish control. She is very careful of what she says, and never exaggerates or gets carried away. She's a little mischievous sometimes, but if she says a thing will be so, it is pretty sure to be so."

"But, great Scott," protested Addison, "if that's true, and I presume it is, it means that everything we do is destined; in other words, that we're mere puppets with no choice or free will at all."

"We always have choice and free will," Ostrander said, with his attractive smile, "but there are those who are permitted to see what our choice will be, that is all. You chose to come to England this month. Hedda could have told you long ago that you would come to England this month. That doesn't alter the fact that you chose to come."

"Well, it's too much for me," Addison said. "I can't see it at all. Thirty years ago my father gave me a beating I didn't deserve, and I ran away from home with three dollars in my pocket. I remember going to the station, and wondering if I'd go north or south to look for work. If I'd gone north, everything would have been different. I wouldn't have been here now. Why, there have been ten thou-

sand things, big and little, that might have changed the whole course of my life."

"It simply depends," Ostrander answered, "on where you stand in regard to time. Hedda, when she wants to, can look on either side of us. On our left, let us say, lies the past. On our right, the future. Where we happen to be standing at the moment is the present. She can as easily look to the right as to the left. But she is very extraordinary. Some controls are careless, and speak without looking, but Hedda never does."

Addison shook his head.

"It's too much for me," he repeated. "Can you get hold of Hedda whenever you want to?"

"Provided I can get the right conditions. I must have a quiet room and a small circle. As a rule, darkness isn't necessary."

"You say we make the future," persisted Addison, "and yet you're trying to prove to me that it's already made."

"No, no," protested Ostrander, smiling. "I'm not trying to prove it. I try to prove nothing."

Addison went on, "One thing seems to me to contradict the other. I suppose you wouldn't try and see if you could tell me anything?"

His eagerness was so apparent that Ostrander

was won. He paused at the rail, and looked at the low sky, and the dark and lava-like sea.

"If you like," he said. "Of course it may not be very successful here. I don't feel as well on the ocean as I would like, and the trance state in addition to that . . . still, I might try. It will be an interesting experience for you, perhaps. You say you've never been present at a sitting?"

"Never, and I'd like to, immensely."

Ostrander said, after a moment's silence:

"Come to my stateroom, then, Number 164, at ten to-night. And bring your friend. Warren? Warner. I will ask a lady who sits at my table. I don't know her name, but we have spoken to each other once or twice. There ought to be five of us."

"It's very good of you," Addison said. "I've wondered a lot about these things, but they've never come my way before."

"A great many people," said Ostrander, "close their minds to them at once, unless they've had some experience of their own. And many never unclose them. I assure you, I've been called a charlatan and a liar often enough. Hedda gets so angry, poor girl."

"It sounds queer to hear you speak of her like that," exclaimed Addison.

"There's nothing queer about it," Ostrander told

him. "Its only new to you. Please be very matter-of-fact to-night. It helps. And if they speak to you, answer them as you would answer me."

Addison was so excited at the thought of what he was to see and hear that evening, that he ate little and drank nothing. Warner, during dinner, told him what to expect, and what the procedure was like. Then, as it was mild out, and almost windless, they walked the deck, and smoked until five minutes to ten.

They found Number 164, and discovered that they were the last to arrive. Three people were already in the stateroom: Mr. Ostrander, a middle-aged lady, who was introduced as Mrs. Pelham, and a slender, good-looking young woman of perhaps twenty-eight or nine, whom Addison had noticed more than once. Mrs. Pelham on being asked to come had suggested that she bring a ship-board acquaintance, with whom, oddly enough, she had been discussing spiritualism the day before. The younger woman's name was Miss Fellows. Both were English.

After the introductions were made, Ostrander said, smiling:

"We're a trifle cramped for space here, but I think we can manage. Let me see. Mrs. Pelham, Miss Fellows and I will sit on the sofa, and you

and Mr. Warner will have to sit on the edge of the berth, if you don't mind."

They arranged themselves as he suggested, and all but Ostrander and Warner held hands. These two had, respectively, their left and right hands free, as Ostrander said he liked the circle to be broken at one point. Addison's left hand held Miss Fellows's right, and his right hand Warner's left.

"I wish we had a gramophone or a music-box," Ostrander said. "Music helps very much. But at least we can have a song. Suppose we sing 'Abide with me.' We all know that."

They sang one verse, Ostrander, firmly and loudly, Addison and Warner with some embarrassment, Miss Fellows in a clear, trained voice that was very pleasing, and Mrs. Pelham in an unmusical and uncertain quaver.

The electric light was dimmed behind a piece of thick, brown paper, but Addison could see all the faces clearly enough, and all ten hands, too, were visible.

"Just talk to each other in the ordinary way," Ostrander told them, and Addison looked across at Miss Fellows's intelligent and attractive face, and said:

"I suppose you've often done this sort of thing before?"

"Never," she answered. "I've read a good deal about it, and I've always found it interesting, but somehow it hasn't come my way."

"Nor mine," Addison said.

"What about you, Mrs. Pelham?" Warner asked.

"Oh," she answered, "I've had a great deal of experience. I'm very psychic myself. And ever since I was a child I've done automatic writing."

Addison thought she was a type frequently met with in hotels and *pensions*. He summed her up shrewdly enough. Of uncertain age, badly dressed, sad-looking, lonely, living, probably, on the smallest of incomes, he judged her to be the widow of an Indian Civil Servant, or of a professor. She would be almost sure, he thought, to have a son in Canada, or a daughter married to a parson. She had dipped at different times into Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and probably tried not to be bitter about her life. Her automatic writing would be a great consolation to her, he imagined, and would give her, among her friends, a certain distinction.

Miss Fellows was a thoroughly nice young woman, independent, good-looking, unafraid, probably talented in some way.

"I guess I won't be much use at this séance," said Addison humbly. "I'm about as psychic as a ton of coal."

"As long as you don't break the circle it doesn't matter," said Ostrander. "And there are the most amazing properties in a ton of coal."

They all laughed at that, and the eyes of Addison and Miss Fellows met in the gloom.

"I feel a sort of electric current in both hands," said Addison. "Prickings, like little shocks. It's rather pleasant."

The others said they felt them too, and there was a general atmosphere of expectancy. Meanwhile the ship rolled moderately, and not uncomfortably, the twin screws shuddered as they turned, the waves went hissing by, underneath the portholes, and something creaked over their heads; the sort of creak inevitable in a moving ship. The five of them sat there in the brown gloom, speaking at intervals, and Addison thought it the strangest experience he had ever had.

"Yes, we shall have results soon," said Ostrander presently. He spoke slowly, sleepily. "I am going away now."

"That means he's going into a trance," explained Mrs. Pelham, who seemed prepared, in the absence of Mr. Ostrander, to take charge. "We must go on talking. Tension is bad for everybody."

"I hope Hedda comes," said Warner. "Hedda's a marvel. It does me good just to hear her voice."

"T'ank you, nice man."

Out of the air, over their heads, somewhere near the ceiling, Addison thought, came the Swedish girl's voice. The strangeness, the unexpectedness of it seemed to jerk every nerve in his body, but his grasp of the two hands he held did not relax. He looked at Ostrander. His eyes were closed and he was leaning his head against the back of the sofa, and breathing loudly and regularly. The voice had certainly not come through his lips, but high up, over his head.

"Is that really you, Hedda?" asked Warner. He spoke affectionately, as he would have spoken to a friend.

"Yes, dat's me. I t'ink you all look vary silly, I do. I ban laughing at you." She did laugh, an amused chuckle, pleasant to hear. "What a funny place for a meeting! Hanry bad man to make me come. Hanry ban sick, poor man. I not stay vary long."

They all looked at Ostrander, whose eyes and lips remained closed. His face was smooth and white, wiped of all expression.

"But you'll stay for a little while and talk to us, won't you?" Warner pleaded. "I met you in New York, you know."

"Yes," came Hedda's reply, and her voice had

an indescribable quality of gayety. "I remember you. You silly man. You lend money to a bad man who lose it all." She laughed again as at an exquisite joke.

"I know," said Warner. "You were perfectly right. I haven't forgotten."

"Have you a message for me, Hedda?" asked Mrs. Pelham. She spoke as an elderly governess might speak to a child who needed managing. "I would so like a message to-night, if you please. Something nice and comforting."

"To-morrow you ban seasick," was Hedda's reply. "Oh, vary, vary seasick."

"Oh, dear! Does that mean that we shall have a bad storm? Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

There was no reply. Hedda, it seemed, had conceived an instant dislike for Mrs. Pelham. She ignored her from that moment.

"I know Amy," she said suddenly.

A shiver ran up Addison's spine. He controlled himself, and his face gave no sign of his feelings.

"Do you know Amy? I'm glad. How is she?"

"Amy's all right. I like Amy. Amy says no message for you. She only say, 'Everything all right. Give love to Malville.' That's all. She glad you come, though."

"Couldn't she talk to me?" he asked.

"No. Amy got vary little power. Not like me. I got a lot of power. I touch you, good man."

Addison felt, against his neck, the touch of light fingers, but they were like fingers charged with electricity. Then Hedda laughed again, close to him.

"There. You feel?"

"I felt you," Addison said.

"That not easy, to touch some one," she said proudly. "I got lots of power to-night, but I not stay long. Hanry ban sick."

"Hedda, dear, can't you give me any news of my husband?" Mrs. Pelham then asked. "I'd be *so* grateful."

She got no reply. There was an embarrassing silence, and they thought Hedda had gone away, but suddenly she burst out laughing.

"You nice man, you Malville," she said. "You hold your wife's hand, and don't know it. I t'ink dat vary funny."

"My wife's hand?" Melville Addison exclaimed. "Do you mean I'm holding Amy's hand at the same time?"

"No, not Amy, you silly. Not Amy. Your new wife. I t'ink her name like Angel. She vary nice. I like her."

A dead silence fell then. At last Miss Fellows spoke.

"You're just making jokes, Hedda," she said. "My name's Angela, but I'm not Mr. Addison's wife. I'm not married to anybody."

Hedda laughed uncontrollably. Her girlish and unrestrained mirth there in that dim stateroom, as the ship rolled and throbbed, and the waves rushed by outside, never faded from Addison's memory.

"Oh, you silly Angel! I ban seeing you married to dat man. Not now, not now, but soon, I guess. I like you, Angel."

Miss Fellows retained Addison's hand without a quiver.

"Well, it's very odd," she said, with good humor, "as I never met him before to-night."

Hedda ignored this.

"I wake up Hanry now," she said. "Hanry not ban well."

"Are you going, Hedda?" Warner cried. "Don't go yet."

"Wait," she said. "I touch you, nice man."

There was a moment's silence. Then:

"You feel?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Warner. "Thank you, Hedda. You touched my cheek."

"I kissed you," she said, and laughed.

Then a very different silence fell, like the silence that falls upon a room when some one very vital goes out of it, and shuts the door. Hedda, they knew, had gone. A personality had just been with them, fresh, childish, innocent, sprite-like, and it had left behind what was heavy and ponderous, to be seen and touched. Warner, with a sigh, released his hand from Addison's, and the circle was broken. Ostrander, his face working a little, moved, his eyelids flickered, and then opened, and he sat upright. They watched him anxiously, and seeing their eyes fixed on him, he presently got to his feet with a smile.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well, Hedda came, all right," Warner answered. "She's as wonderful as ever."

Ostrander reached for the carafe, and poured himself out a glass of water, which he drank thirstily.

"I think she was anxious about me," he said. "She watches over my health like a mother. I had a rather serious illness before I left New York."

"I do hope you don't feel any the worse for it," said Miss Fellows. "It's quite true, she was anxious."

Ostrander resumed his seat, and passed a hand over his eyes.

"No, it hasn't done me any harm. Did she give you any messages?"

"She predicted a bad storm to-morrow," said Mrs. Pelham, and the others, feeling that she had received rather harsh treatment at Hedda's hands, let it go at that.

"She got my name," said Miss Fellows, "and Mr. Addison's name, and that of his wife. That in itself seems to me very remarkable. Personally, I'm most grateful to you."

"It was the most interesting experience I ever had," said Addison, and for the first time since Warner had removed the brown paper from the light, his eyes met those of Miss Fellows. Hers smiled reassuringly into his, as if to say:

"Don't worry. It hasn't upset me in the least. I shall think no more about it."

"No one can imagine what Hedda is to me," Ostrander said. "A combination of daughter and guardian angel. She has never once failed me. I'm glad you were interested and satisfied, Addison. It was your eagerness that made me try the experiment. It might easily have failed, under these difficult conditions. Were any of you touched?"

"I was," said Addison. "It was extraordinary."

"So was I," said Warner.

"As far as I'm concerned," remarked Mrs. Pel-

ham, "I found her a little disappointing. I usually get such interesting messages from people who have passed over, things of real import."

"She has her likes and dislikes," said Ostrander, "like every one else, and for reasons I don't understand at all. Some of my sitters she'll talk to, and some she won't have anything to do with, and there's no making her."

Mrs. Pelham then began to tell them how popular she was with other controls, and the rest listened with bored politeness, and when she had finished, got up to go. They all thanked Ostrander warmly. Warner and Addison said good night to the two ladies, and then went together to the smoking room for a drink and a talk. The ladies said good night to each other then and there, and went their separate ways.

"What a tiresome woman," thought Miss Fellows. "I almost wish I hadn't spoken to her yesterday, but if I hadn't, I wouldn't have gone to this séance, and it has been terribly interesting. I wonder if I'll see anything more of Mr. Addison? I must let him know that I think nothing of these prophecies, otherwise he'll be afraid that I might feel uncomfortable, and he'll avoid me."

"Purely a case of mind reading, if it wasn't something worse," Mrs. Pelham said to herself as she

went to her stateroom. "It was in the girl's mind, of course, as she sat there holding that man's hand: 'I wonder if this is the man I shall marry?' It's in every girl's mind these days, with men so scarce. The reason Hedda (or Ostrander) didn't like me was because I was skeptical of the whole business. I know the difference between a real séance and a fake one, and this one was undoubtedly very fishy."

But, fishy or not, she had a miserable night, woke at six, and rang for the stewardess. The ship was rolling heavily, everything in her stateroom was swinging and sliding, and she felt unspeakably wretched. When the stewardess came she said she wanted to get up, that she must get up. The stewardess looked at her critically, and said:

"You may as well try, madam, but I don't advise it."

She did try, but it was a forlorn attempt, and ended disastrously. No one saw her the whole of that day.

Miss Fellows dressed quickly, and was on deck by nine o'clock. Nothing, she felt, but the wind and the salty air would save her. She lay, warmly wrapped in rugs, in her steamer chair, which was lashed to the rail behind her, and she thought over the events of the night before. She had no intention of either seeking out or avoiding Mr. Addison.

On the whole, she liked him very much; she thought him honest, simple, and straightforward; but Hedda (or Ostrander) had certainly been misled, or had merely drawn a bow at a venture. She had come to no conclusions as to the genuineness of the séance, although on the whole she was inclined to believe in it.

The night before, as they sat in the smoking room, Warner had said to Addison:

"Even as an exhibition of mind reading it was very remarkable, and personally I'm inclined to think it was very much more than that."

"Well, I was tremendously impressed until Hedda made that shot in the dark about me and Miss Fellows," Addison had answered. "It was too much like the sort of prophecy a gipsy makes when you cross her palm with silver. But, just supposing for the moment," he added, "that it was a genuine foretelling of the future. Surely I can make up my mind to avoid it? Surely, I need never see that young woman again unless I wish to? There's no reason why I ever should see her again. And then, where would Hedda be?"

Warner laughed.

"Don't," he said. "It makes my brain reel. If it was a real foretelling of the future, as you were assuming, how can you possibly avoid it? If it

isn't . . . but I wouldn't think too much about it, if I were you."

"I can't help thinking about it," Addison admitted.

Warner asked, with some diffidence:

"Do you find Miss Fellows . . . attractive?"

"Yes . . . oh, yes, quite, on the whole." He added impatiently, "But, hang it all, I shan't go near her now."

And he had meant to keep his word, but he too sought the deck early, and was surprised to find Miss Fellows already in her chair. To pass her without stopping to speak would have suggested that he was afraid to stop and speak. He therefore paused, coloring noticeably, beside her, and steadying himself with a hand on the rail, said good morning.

She commented on the wild weather, and then said valiantly:

"I'm sorry Hedda made such an absurd prophecy last night. It almost destroyed my faith in her. But I suppose *they* are liable to mistakes, like any one else."

"Do you think it was all bunkum?—the séance, I mean," he asked.

"I don't know. I've been trying to make up my mind. I feel that Mr. Ostrander is honest, and that

if there's any deceiving going on, he's deceiving himself. But I must say there was something very convincing about it. Anyhow," she added, "it was intensely interesting."

He changed the subject.

"I suppose you live in England?"

"Yes. I've just been to America on business."

"Business? May I ask what sort?"

"Yes. It's no secret. I'm a buyer. I buy pictures, on commission, for rich Americans, and others. I've just been staying with one of the former on Long Island, helping him to arrange his collection. It's a very new collection. I bought every one of the pictures in it myself."

"Pictures!" exclaimed Addison, with mixed feelings. "Well, that's very interesting indeed!"

"This particular collection has meant four years' hard work," she went on. "It's not very big, but it's very good, if I do say it myself. I suppose you think I'm too young to be an expert, besides being a woman; but my father was a famous connoisseur, and I've lived with pictures all my life. He taught me all he could, and I think I've inherited his *flair,* as well. Are you interested in pictures at all?"

"Am I?" he cried. "Why, pictures are my one hobby. Do you mind," he asked, indicating an

empty chair next to her, "if I sit down here and talk?"

When they parted, just before lunch, the ship was rolling so heavily that they had difficulty in making their way along the deck, and very few people were about. Addison thought, as he ate his lunch:

"Well, the plot thickens. But, good Lord, surely I can talk to a young woman about Tiepolo without marrying her. I shan't see her again after we leave Southampton."

They bade each other good-bye as they left the ship. In spite of the fact that they had become good friends, and had had many interesting talks, nothing was said about a future meeting. Miss Fellows, dressed in a beautifully made coat and skirt, and the smartest of hats, smiled regretfully as she lost sight of him in the crowd.

"Hedda spoiled that," she thought, and she was sorry, for, quite apart from marrying Mr. Addison, she would have liked to see him again very much. But she was a busy and practical young woman, and she made up her mind that she wasn't going to give herself any unhappy moments over it. And then, to their mutual surprise, they found themselves sitting opposite to each other in the train to London.

"How amusing this is," thought Miss Fellows.

"I think the best thing to do is to treat the whole affair as a joke."

"How pleased Hedda must be to see us here," she said, and at that he laughed heartily.

"Well," he said, "I guess you're right. It's no use avoiding the subject. Let's get all the fun we can out of it."

"I've already had a great deal," she answered. "More than you know."

"I've been thinking of your feelings far more than my own," he told her, knowing that she had read his mind. "I can't help thinking that it must be very annoying for you."

"It isn't a bit," she said, candidly. "I find it very amusing. It has added spice to the voyage."

"It has certainly done that," he admitted. Then he added, "Ostrander gave me his London address, and asked me to come to another meeting if I wished."

"He asked me, too. Will you go?"

"Will you?" he parried.

"No. I've had enough of séances. They're apt to be upsetting. I must keep my mind on my work now."

Her mind had been troubled, then, in spite of her composure. His heart beat faster at this, and when his eyes met hers, her look stirred him. Amazing!

He was falling in love, or something very like it. Was it Hedda's doing, or was this coming to him anyway? He wished he knew. He didn't mind falling in love; he liked it, like anyone else; but he hated to feel that he was only a puppet, jerked by hidden wires. He'd show Hedda yet that he had free will, confound her! He could still hear the tones of that fresh, childish voice:

"You hold your wife's hand now, and don't know it. I t'ink dat vary funny."

Angela Fellows was looking away from him now, out of the window, and he seized the opportunity of studying her. She was certainly very attractive, and decidedly clever. She knew more about pictures in five minutes than he knew in a month. And she was as sincere and frank a woman as he had ever met. He'd trust her with his buying, any day, only he preferred, risky as it was, to have the fun of doing it himself.

When they arrived at Victoria, she said with her slightly teasing smile:

"I expect it really is good-bye, this time."

He thought he must seem to her timorous, cautious, cowardly. He was in a quandary. Surely they could meet again without thinking of Hedda? He made up his mind quickly.

"Won't you please give me your address, and

lunch with me one day? I'll tell you what I've bought, and what I'm thinking of buying."

"Willingly," she answered. "As a matter of fact, I think it's much wiser to arrange to meet. Otherwise we're almost certain to meet accidentally, and that would look so ominous to you, wouldn't it?"

"Let's try to forget all this Hedda business," he said. "It's spoiling everything."

He wrote down her address, and they parted. And then, on thinking the matter over, he decided that the situation was insupportable for both of them, and that on the whole it was best that they shouldn't meet. So he tore up her address, and tried not to think about her again.

But they moved in the same little world, a world that concerned itself with the buying and selling of pictures, and at the next big sale at Christie's he saw her. She saw him, too, and laughed as she waved her hand.

"I've acted like a fool," he thought, as he went to meet her across the crowded saleroom.

"I hope we're not going to bid against each other," she said. "There are one or two things here I want badly."

He said there was just one thing he wanted badly, and he meant to have it.

"I know what it is."

"I expect you do. I told you once you were clever enough to read my mind."

"Oh, clever . . .!" she murmured. "I don't know about that. Sometimes it's like a child's primer, that mind of yours."

She bid for a Cosway miniature, and got it, and then for a small Rubens that had just come into the market, and lost it, and said she was glad. Then they found they were both bidding for a Peter Breughel.

"Give it up," she whispered to him. "My Long Island man's got his heart set on it, and I mean to bid high." She added, "Besides, I want him to have it."

He soon dropped out, for he saw she meant what she said. The picture was knocked down to her, and he said to her afterwards:

"It wasn't you I was bidding against, but that Crœsus on Long Island. I'd gladly have given it up to you."

He presently began bidding for a Canaletto, which had been his second choice, but she scribbled something on a piece of paper, and slipped it into his hand.

"Don't bid for it," she had written. "I'm certain it's not right. I've examined it very carefully."

He at once dropped out, and that finished his bidding for the day.

"If you really want a Canaletto," she said, "I know where there is one. It's small, but very good. We can go there now if you like."

He found the Canaletto to his taste, and bought it. And, grateful to her for having saved him from a probable mistake, he put his pride in his pocket —his pride in himself as the maker of his own destiny—and asked her to dine with him. She was engaged for the next three evenings, but he secured her for the one following.

When he left her that day he admitted to himself, like an honest man, that he was very much in love. Only second in strength to his passionate liking for, and admiration of Miss Fellows was his disgust at realizing that he was following out Hedda's prophecy like a hypnotized hen whose beak is placed on a white chalk line. He loved Miss Fellows, but he hated to give in to a ready-made fate (if it was fate). He was torn this way and that, irritated, humiliated, and confused. He was at liberty to put a spoke in Hedda's wheel, so to speak, by turning his back on Angela and going back to America, but he would be cutting off his nose to spite a spirit in which he only half believed. He cursed Ostrander and all his works.

A week later, Angela dined with him again. She looked very lovely that night, and Addison's mind was like a battlefield full of struggling armies. They had been at the table only twenty minutes when she exclaimed:

"I nearly forgot to ask you. Did you by any chance see in the *Morning Post* yesterday that our friend Ostrander had been exposed, arrested, and was now out on bail?"

"What?" he cried. "Is it possible?"

"Perhaps you only read *The Times*. It wasn't in *The Times*."

"Well, that's the most exciting piece of news I've heard for years," he said.

"You little suspected that you were a free agent once more, and that the prophecy was as false as most prophecies are?" She laughed. "What a relief it must be to you. I can see it in your face. You're the most unchivalrous man I've ever known."

"Yes, it's a weight off my mind," he admitted. "I feel ten years younger. Don't you feel happier, too? Why, the knowledge that whatever I do, I do because I *want* to do it, and not because I'm just fated to . . . It's like being born again. . . . I'd rather have had this happen than have been left a million dollars."

"Really!" she said. "If it had been foretold that your fate was to be broken on the rack, you couldn't have been more pleased at escaping it. Fortunately for you, I'm a good-tempered woman."

"I'm glad," he said, "because now I can ask you to marry me."

It was a long time before she would give him an answer. She said:

"Do you mean to tell me you love me, and yet that you'd have let your absurd pride, or whatever you call it, come between us?"

"I loathed the thought of acting like an automaton," he explained. "Oh, eventually, of course, I would have succumbed. I was bound to."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it."

She confessed that she had always wanted to marry some one she could see through, and that from the first she had liked him out of all proportion to his merits. She accepted him, finally, and they clasped each other's hands under the table, during a long and emotional silence. Then, recovering herself, she said:

"You're the most gullible man I ever knew, Melville. No wonder people sell you duds now and then. My dear, there wasn't a word of truth in

what I said about Ostrander. I didn't tell a lie, either. I only asked a question, if you remember. There was nothing about him in the papers. I believe him to be as honest as the day. But your state of mind was really becoming unbearable for both of us. I simply made it easy for you to succumb. I made you, for the moment, a free born American citizen again, and master of your fate."

He gazed at her in ironic admiration.

"You're too damned clever, Angela."

"I know," she said meekly. "That's why you need me so."

He said good night to her at the door of her flat in South Street. He was exceedingly happy, but perplexed.

"This business defeats me," he said. "Would we have fallen in love with each other if Hedda hadn't suggested it to us?"

"If we'd had the good fortune to meet I think we probably would. But, then, we probably wouldn't have met if it hadn't been for the séance!"

"And you really believe the whole thing was genuine?"

"I don't know. Yes, I think I do. I think I want to think so. Anyhow, some one seemed able to look into the future pretty successfully."

"But what I can't make out is, *was* it the future then? Or did we make it come true ourselves, once the idea was put into our heads? That's what I want to know."

"Well, you never will, my poor darling," she said.

The Heroine

The Heroine

HUSBANDS, while showing a surprising variety, can yet be classified as a rule under a few general headings. There is, for instance, the "putty-in-the-home, adamant-at-the-office" type of husband, well known to readers of American fiction. There is also the "good fellow-at-the-club, tyrant-in-the-home" type of husband, well known to readers of English fiction.

Mrs. Mellish was acquainted with examples of both these types and with many others besides; for although she was a shy and reticent woman she observed far more than people gave her credit for; but she reflected, as she rang the doorbell of her —or rather Proctor's—house in one of the less fashionable London squares, that Proctor seemed to have neither precursors nor imitators. He was in a class by himself; and therefore in dealing with him she had always felt herself to be beyond the aid of precedent, that guide to behavior so many wives find invaluable.

She had reached a point in her relations with him when she felt that life was really not worth living if it must be lived so joylessly; and when, in her extremity, she was driven to tell him so, he advised her with kindly indifference and indifferent kindness to take a holiday, which she did for the first time in their seven years of married life.

But she knew only too well that as soon as she crossed the hall and opened the door of his library she would take up her life with him exactly where it had been temporarily disconnected two weeks ago. He would greet her pleasantly and indifferently, he would ask her perfunctory questions about her visit, to which he would pretend to listen, and he would then go on being just as Proctorish as he had been for the last five years—for it had taken him two to discover that he had married a hopelessly dull woman.

And Proctor, without being unfaithful, was in love with brilliant women; in love with women who made their power felt; in love with fascinating women who charmed crowds nightly, who sang before crowned heads, who excelled other women, who swayed the policies of governments.

Proctor himself didn't feel called upon to sway anything, because he had inherited a comfortable income from his mother; but it distressed him that

life had cheated him out of an unusual wife, a wife who could have made something, by Jove, of him. He was one of the few men who could have borne, oddly enough, to have been the obscure husband of a diva. Such was Proctor Mellish, and it is quite possible that there are no more like him.

At that moment, returning from her holiday, during which she had "thought things over," Mrs. Mellish felt desperate.

"I can't go on like this," she told herself; "I can't. He scarcely knows I exist. I might as well be dead and buried. Better, in fact." But she smiled brightly at the maid and asked her how things had been going in her absence, and tried not to mind when the girl innocently replied, "Oh, the master says exactly as well as when you're at home, ma'am." And when she was left alone in the hall outside the door of his library, she stood clutching a copy of the *Morning Post* in her hands, letting the consciousness of her misery lash her into doing a thing against which all her finer feelings revolted.

He put down a book—he was a great reader—as she entered the room, and, uncrossing his long legs, got up to greet her. The book, she couldn't help noticing, was a life of Florence Nightingale. "Now, there's a woman—" he had often said.

"Ah, here you are, my dear! Back again.

Excellent. And looking brighter, I'm glad to see." The kiss upon the cheek, dutiful and casual, followed, and then he folded himself into his deep chair again, recrossing those long, tired legs. "Excellent," he repeated. "And how were the Crofton-Blakes?"

She sat down near him, still holding the *Morning Post*. She was frightened, but resolute. She would drop a bombshell into the sea of his bored complacency and see what happened. She would have to pay the piper in the end, no doubt, but she would have her pathetic little dance first; and her husband would look at her for once with interest in his eyes —yes, with interest, even though it lasted for only a week, a day, an hour.

"They're both very well," she answered, "and I had a really delightful visit, Proctor. The weather was lovely, and their garden was looking beautiful. We had tea out of doors every day."

"Ah! Very nice." He was fingering his book. "And how are they both? Oh, very well, you said. Quite so—that's excellent. And what else did you do besides have tea in the garden?" He had his long fingers between the pages now—he was looking for his place.

"We motored a good deal, and I went for a number of walks by myself. They aren't fond of

walking, either of them. I took," she added, "several early-morning walks before breakfast."

"Very hardy of you, my dear. But you look all the better for it. Delightful time, the early morning, if you've got the constitution for that sort of thing. Very peaceful."

"One of my walks," she said, coloring and swallowing, "wasn't peaceful at all."

"Wasn't, eh? Dear me. What happened? You lost your way, I dare say. Or was it a tramp?"

He had found his place now, and was adjusting his glasses.

"It wasn't either." She paused, and during that pause Mr. Mellish turned a page. He didn't even care to hear what it was that had disturbed the serenity of her early walk. He would only be told some tiresome little anecdote, he suspected; some tale of how a neighbor's dog had killed a neighbor's cat.

She took a long breath.

"Proctor, I suppose you've been reading the papers?"

He looked up. He regarded her blandly and patiently.

"Certainly. That is my habit. I have read my *Times* every morning, and at night I have read my *Evening Standard*. Why do you ask?"

At least she now had his attention. More. Something he saw in her face had aroused his interest. If only, she thought, he would look like that oftener —expectant—aware of her.

There was no going back now.

"Did you happen to—I suppose you read about the Home Secretary and—and about the narrow escape he had?"

"Of course. That was some days ago. The papers have been full of it. How he had left London by an early train to join his family at Brighton for the week-end——"

"Yes," she interrupted, "yes. And how he fell out of the train on to the line, and was nearly run over by another express going the other way, and how he was dragged off the rails in the nick of time by—by an unknown woman."

"Yes, yes. I know all that. They've printed his photograph half a dozen times, and a picture of the spot where he fell. It was somewhere in your neighborhood. Extraordinary the way people fall out of trains. I don't know how they manage it. He was trying to shut the window, he says."

She nodded. "Yes, that must have been it."

He threw her a quick glance, puzzled by something in her manner. He had half closed his book now, keeping a finger in to mark his place. He was

saying to himself, "She's full of the thing just because it happened within a few miles of her." And then another thought flashed through his mind.

"You didn't, I suppose, see the thing occur by any chance? You weren't actually near at hand?"

She was pink to the eyes, and her heart seemed to be pounding visibly in her throat.

"Yes, I was—I was near by," she answered, breathless. "I—I did see it happen. I was there, close beside the line."

"By gad!" he cried with enthusiasm. "By gad! I'd like to have seen that myself. What a woman! They say she must have been standing on the bridge or just near it. She must have seen him fall from the last car, strike the rails, and lie there dazed or stunned; then in the twinkling of an eye she seems to have run down the embankment, seized him by the shoulders, and dragged him off the line—the up line—about a second before the Brighton to London express came through the tunnel and upon them. Amazing! That's heroism, if you like."

She started to speak, but he preferred to tell the story himself.

"And then," he went on, "as soon as she saw the train had stopped, they say she made off up the embankment again like a rabbit and disappeared. Did you see her? What did she look like?"

There was a pause, dramatic and prolonged, and then she spoke.

"Like me," came her answer in a small, uncertain voice. "It—it *was* me, Proctor. I am the unknown woman. I did it. I ran away as soon as I saw people coming toward me."

He leaped from his chair, and *Florence Nightingale* shot out of his hand.

"What! You? You? You, Mary Mellish? My heavens! My wife? It isn't possible! Why, you're a heroine, by gad! A heroine!"

"Yes," she whispered, trembling now, looking palely away from him. "I—I suppose I am, in a way. But don't tell anybody, Proctor. Promise me you won't tell anybody. This is—this is just between ourselves."

"Between ourselves!" he shouted. "What are you talking about, my dearest girl!" It was years since he had called her that. "Are you aware that the Home Secretary is *looking* for you? Are you aware that all England is *talking* about you? My wife! Gracious Heavens! To think that you had the pluck, the quickness, the bravery, the strength, the—the *nerve!*"

"It wasn't really difficult," she stammered. "Not —not really. There he was and there I was, and my feet just carried me to him."

"Did you realize it was the Home Secretary?"

She shook her head.

"Not till I saw it in the papers. The face seemed familiar, but it was all over so quickly. There was no time——"

"Was he conscious? Did he look at you? Do you think he would know you again?"

"I—I think he looked at me. He tried to speak —yes, I'm almost sure he looked at me, but I don't think he was really conscious. I'm certain he wouldn't know me again. How could he? I was just a face bending over him, and my hat had slipped down over my eyes."

"Well, well? What did you do then?"

"Well, I'd just got him safely off, poor thing, when the train roared out of the tunnel, and then to my amazement it stopped further on—I'd no idea a train could stop so quickly—and men jumped out and ran toward me, and I was thankful, for then I knew I needn't go for help, and that I could just slip away. And I did, as fast as ever I could, and got home in time for breakfast. Phil and Harriet didn't even know I'd been out. They weren't down yet. So—so of course I didn't tell them anything. I never mean to tell anyone but you, Proctor, and I want you to promise me you won't tell anyone, either. Promise me, please!"

"But, my darling girl, I can't do that. Why, the thing's colossal—immense! You—at the very risk of your life—and the Home Secretary— By gad! Mary Mellish—my wife!" He made a gesture with his long arms. "Colossal! Kiss me!"

He drew her to him; but for the first and only time in her life she refused to let him kiss her —refused! And it was just this for which she would have sold her soul. She turned her head away. She spoke violently, passionately.

"No, no, Proctor! I won't kiss you. I won't, unless you promise me faithfully you won't tell a soul. I'll never kiss you again if you tell. I mean it, I swear I do. Isn't it enough that you know? Aren't you satisfied with that? The publicity would kill me. I—I simply couldn't endure it."

"You amazing woman!" He laughed, trying to make her look at him. "You amazing, modest little woman! You act as one of the Brontë sisters might have acted, and I admire you for it. But, my dear, the Home Secretary wants to thank you. Look at it from his point of view—from his family's point of view."

"They've got him safe and sound, haven't they?" she demanded. "What more do they want?"

"And I've got you safe and sound!" he cried, finding the moment an exalting one. "And what

more do I want? Well, Mary, I promise. I promise. Now kiss me."

He kissed his heroine, who seemed to melt with happiness in his arms; then, suddenly, she clung to him with something forlorn and piteous in her embrace, and, bursting into tears, cried:

"Oh, Proctor, why aren't you always like this? Why don't you always love me like this? It's so heavenly to be loved and admired! Oh, yes, I suppose you do love me, really, but why do you never show it? Why are you always indifferent and bored? You see now that I've got courage and wits —well, remember it. Oh, remember it! And if I seem dull and poor-spirited it's your thinking me so that makes me so. Remember that, too."

But it wasn't, after all, his contrition that she wanted; it was his attention, his admiration, his interest; and she stopped his words of rather pompous explanation and excuse by putting a gentle hand over his mouth.

"There, dear, that's enough, that's enough. Only it makes me feel a miserable—*thing*—to be thought poorly of by you. You never will again, will you?"

He swore that he never would; that, indeed, he never had. He made much of her. That very night he took her out to dinner and the theater, and as

he looked about him at the people, he longed to get to his feet and say:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this lady here beside me, Mrs. Proctor Mellish, is the woman who at the risk of her own life saved the life of the Home Secretary a few days ago in a thrilling and spectacular manner. Modesty and shyness have prevented her from coming forward, but I now take this opportunity of introducing you to the greatest heroine in all England. Ladies and gentlemen—my wife!"

What a sensation it would make! The Home Secretary was still, through the papers, urging his rescuer to make herself known, and the papers themselves were still showing a lively curiosity as to the identity of the mysterious woman, and the reasons for her silence and flight. Several people who had seen her bending over the prostrate man as the train thundered by were ready to swear that she was fashionably dressed and unusually attractive. A well-known cinema manager tried to tempt her out of her obscurity by offering her a fat salary, and various gentlemen wrote to the papers and expressed a willingness to take her hand in marriage.

Mrs. Mellish, anxiously reading these columns, showed daily an increasing nervousness. If they would only let the whole thing drop—talk about something else. Surely there would be a murder

soon to divert the attention of the public. But for some time, to her acute discomfiture, the speculations persisted. Then, at last, as public interest gradually began to flag, Mr. Mellish's good resolutions flagged with it. What was the use, he asked himself, of having a heroic wife if no one knew of it? He had promised not to tell, but that did not prevent him, as the days passed, from dropping a word here, a hint there. At his club, where he was not as a rule much noticed, he began to achieve a certain notoriety as the only man who knew who the woman was who had saved the Home Secretary's life.

"I will name no names," he finally said, after much interrogation and persuasion, "I will name no names, but I don't mind admitting to you that I am about the proudest man in England."

More than that he refused to say; but as the word went the round of the club—a small, rather literary club, where various newspaper men foregathered—it seemed as if the truth might at last become known, and, too, known in such a way that he could say he had had no hand in it.

And while he was awaiting with pleasant qualms the fulfillment of this desire a startling thing occurred.

He came down rather late one morning, and found his wife sitting at the breakfast table reading

the morning paper. She did not raise her face when he bent his head to kiss her, as, since her return, he had been in the habit of doing, but leaned her cheek upon her hand, and, letting the paper fall from her grasp, cried in a voice of acute distress, "Oh, Proctor! Oh, Proctor!"

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "What is it, Mary? Have your shares gone down?"

"You must read it yourself," she said, gathering up the sheets. "Here it is. Oh, Proctor, they say they've discovered—" She broke off, unable to say more. Thrusting the paper into his hand, she walked away to the window, where she stood looking out at the red geraniums in the square.

There was deep silence in the room as he read:

A Heroine Comes to Light. Home Secretary's Plucky Rescuer Found at Last. Amazing Story.

The little village of Brocklebank, Sussex, is all agog with excitement to-day over the discovery that it harbors a young woman of astounding courage and of almost equally astounding modesty.

Miss Ivy Higgins, the pretty, buxom daughter of John Higgins, proprietor of the Hail Fellow Arms, is the heroine. She has at last admitted that it was she who on the morning of June 14th ran down the steep embankment at the mouth of Four Bridges

tunnel on seeing the Home Secretary, Mr. Prendergast, fall from his train, and, at the risk of her life, dragged him off the rails into safety as the eight o'clock express from Brighton to London thundered through the tunnel upon them. That is the story in a nutshell. It was my privilege to hear the details of it last night from the lips of Miss Higgins herself as we sat in the neat parlor behind the spotless bar of the Hail Fellow Arms.

Miss Higgins, to begin with, cannot be more than one or two and twenty; she is comely and fair-haired, and has the bright-blue eye we are apt to associate with deeds of bravery. She lives with her father, whose only child she is.

"I'd had what you might call a tiff with my fiancé, Albert Haydock, the night before," she said, coloring prettily, "and that morning, not having slept very well, I thought I'd go for a walk before breakfast, just to think things over. What had we quarreled about?" she asked, in answer to my question. "Oh, it was nothing much, only Albert is always harping on a girl he knows who acts for the cinema and jumps out of aëroplanes on to destroyers, and things like that. Well, that night I'd had about enough of it, so I asked him whether he wanted to marry an acrobat or a girl who'd mend his socks and cook for him. Then we had a few words—and

that's why I went for an early walk, just to get my bearings, like.

"I walked farther than I meant to, and I was crossing the bridge on the Brighton Line just near where the train goes into Four Bridges tunnel before I knew where I was. I was just about to turn back and hurry along home when I heard a train coming down from London. Ever since I was a kid I've loved standing on a bridge when a fast train's going under it, just for the thrill it gives me, so I stood and waited for this one, and that's what I was doing when I saw what looked like a big black bundle fall out of the last car, strike the rails with a sort of bounce, and roll on to the other line. I knew in a second that it was a man, and I thought he must be dead. Just then I heard the up train whistling at the other end of the tunnel, and I knew I couldn't let that poor man lie there and be chopped to pieces, dead or alive."

She paused for a moment, and I think I saw her shudder at the memory of it. I urged her to continue.

"Well," she said, "I cut across that bridge in less time than it takes to tell it, got down the embankment somehow—it was steep, too— and grabbed the man, never dreaming who he was, by the shoulders. I pulled and pulled and got him off the

line, and only just in time. In less than half a second more that great roaring train would have been on us. My word!" she exclaimed with simple candor, "I wasn't half scared! Well, then the train pulled up further down the line, and some men jumped out and came running toward me. I looked at the man I'd saved and saw he was alive, and I said to myself, 'You'll do now,' and I scrambled up the bank again and made home as fast as ever I could."

When I asked her why she did this, she replied:

"I always was terrible shy, and I couldn't stay there and let them tell me what a little hero I was, not to save my life. And when I got home I knew there'd be a grand fuss as soon as ever it got known, so I told dad and made him promise not to tell, and Albert, too. But somebody must have split"—she smiled charmingly—"because here you are." She exhibited the greatest embarrassment and reluctance when she heard that the Home Secretary would probably come to see her with his family. "It makes me go hot and cold all over to think of it," she said.

Mr. Prendergast means, I understand, to motor to Brocklebank to-morrow, if his injuries permit, to thank Miss Higgins in person. When I asked her what she meant to do about the cinema offer and the offers of marriage, she laughed and said that I'd

better ask Albert. But Albert stoutly refused to be interviewed.

Accompanying these paragraphs was a snapshot of Miss Ivy Higgins standing, smiling, in the doorway of the Hail Fellow Arms, and Mr. Mellish, struggling as he was with the most painful emotions, couldn't help thinking that the reporter's admiration of the young woman's bravery had somewhat colored his judgment of her good looks.

"Comely—buxom—bright-eyed!" he shouted furiously, dashing the paper to the floor. "Lying, brazen hussy of a barmaid! Of all the devilish impostors!" Then, as his wife made no sign of having heard, "Mary!" he cried. "Mary, what are you going to do about it? Eh? Take it lying down? By gad! It makes my blood boil. This is what comes of concealment. This is what comes of your ridiculous, your—your perfectly insane modesty. Pah! That ass of a reporter swallowed the whole thing—if he didn't make it up—but no, there's her photograph. I shall write to the Home Secretary this morning. I should have done it days ago. I am partly to blame for this. I have been weak."

Mrs. Mellish turned away from the window and faced him.

"Proctor, you'll do no such thing, if you please. After all, this is my affair."

He stared at her, his fingers round the handle of the coffeepot.

"Mary, are you mad? I have some pride, if you have not. Do you suppose for one instant that I will allow this vile woman to take the credit for your magnificent act? Do you think I would let *my* wife be cheated out of her just dues—and by a barmaid? You don't know me."

She came to the table, and gently pushed him aside.

"Let me pour out your coffee. You sit down and eat your breakfast, dear. We'll talk about this when you're calmer."

"We'll talk about it now," he said, preparing to open an egg. "Now. Although it astonishes me that we should have to talk about it at all. It is time that Mr. Prendergast knew the truth, and I shall write to him this morning. Nothing more need be said."

Mrs. Mellish's hand shook, in spite of her self-control, as she passed him his cup, and there was a frightened look in her eyes.

"Proctor, isn't it enough that *you* know? Doesn't that mean anything to you? And if you believe in me, if you are proud of me—though

there's no reason, really, why you should be—does anything else matter? It's been so nice just sharing it with you. And, besides, how could I possibly argue about it with a—a barmaid, as you call her? It would be too horrible. 'I did it.' 'No, you didn't; *I* did!' Imagine what it would be like. You couldn't place me in such a dreadful position. You—you couldn't and you won't."

"You are talking childish and ridiculous nonsense," he retorted. "You need have nothing to say to this woman. I shall merely write to Mr. Prendergast, and tell him that he has been misinformed. I shall tell him that the lady who saved his life is Mrs. Proctor Mellish, my wife, and that while she has no wish to be publicly thanked, she feels—and I feel—that she cannot permit him to be duped by a scheming and unscrupulous—person. Then if he chooses to call and thank you for what you did, he may. At least justice will have been done."

Pleased with his own statement of the case, but quite prepared for further opposition on her part, he was proceeding with his breakfast when suddenly a hideous, a perfectly abominable thought struck him.

At this instant every member of his club would be writhing with devilish laughter.

Had he not said that he was the only man who knew who had saved the life of the Home Secretary? Had he not said—ye gods!—not once, but many times, that he was the proudest man in England? The little breakfast room that so cheerfully received the morning sun went black before his eyes. He seemed to hear fiendish voices—"Old Mellish! Ha! Ha! Proudest man in England, eh? The old scoundrel! He! He! I say, Brown, have you heard the latest? Have you heard what Mellish told us here only five days ago? That he was the only man who knew— Ha! Ha!"

With one blow from the back of his spoon he crushed in the empty eggshell and got to his feet, looking very tall, very stern, and rather sick. He walked straight to the writing table and, sitting down, drew pen and paper toward him. Mrs. Mellish left the breakfast table and followed him, a bright spot showing on either cheek.

"Proctor, tell me, what do you mean to do?"

"Kindly leave me alone, Mary. If I had not listened to you before, all would have been well."

"Are you going to write to the Home Secretary?"

"I am."

"Even though I beg you not to? Even though you know it's against my wishes?"

"I cannot now consider your wishes. I must do what I think best."

She put her hands imploringly on his shoulders.

"Proctor, listen to me; I beseech you not to do it. I beseech you! You'll be placing me in the most dreadful position."

He wanted to tell her of the extremely uncomfortable position in which she had placed him, but he could not now put himself in the wrong.

"You will kindly allow me to deal with this as I think best," he said loudly.

"I won't—I can't let you. I can't. Oh, Proctor, how am I to make you see—how am I to tell you? Oh, Proctor, listen, I——"

He turned and looked at her, and the pen dropped from his hand.

"Mary I cannot understand you. How are you to tell me? What do you mean? You act as though—Mary! Is it possible—that you—good Heavens! Is it *possible* that you have—lied to me?"

All the fear went out of her face then. She grew, quite suddenly, composed and calm. She met his look of bleak horror with steady eyes. She nodded her head slowly two or three times, and though her mouth trembled she was mistress of herself.

"Mary! But this is inconceivable! It is—it is utterly damnable. *Why* did you?"

"To make you think well of me," she said, putting a hand over her heart. "To make you—to make you admire me and notice me. To make you proud of me. I was starving for it."

His face worked queerly. He got up with wild eyes and distended nostrils. She watched every move of that grim figure.

He tore up the letter he had begun, and brushed the pieces on the floor.

"You won't think of writing now," she said.

He merely stared at her, walked to the door, opened it, and slammed it behind him. A moment later the front door echoed the slam. Proctor had gone out. But not to his club.

It was late in the afternoon before he returned, a stricken man. He had made up his mind in the course of that miserable day that he would try to bear his trouble like a Christian. He pitied his wife. He would try to be kind to her. With all her faults she loved him; that was clear. She had been driven to this horrible deception through love of him. His pride fed upon that. She adored him, and he would be as kind as he could. His life would not be easy, it would not be gay, but

at least he could be polite. He had never, he was glad to think, been harsh to her.

For two days he was very polite to her. They talked when they met at meals about international affairs and the weather. Having no club to go to—although he had not yet resigned—and finding the atmosphere of his home oppressive, he took long walks or went to the Zoo. On the afternoon of the third day, returning from some such expedition, he was surprised to see standing in front of his house a large, closed car. A chauffeur in dark-blue livery stood beside it. At the sight a wave of nausea swept over him. His story might have got about—it would be strange if it had not. It was even possible that the Home Secretary himself—! Oh, God, no! Anything but that! With cold fingers he silently let himself into the house, closing the door very softly behind him. Listening, he could hear voices upstairs in the drawing room. He went up on tiptoe, and crept into a small room opening off the drawing room and separated from it by curtains. He could hear every word.

"His limp's much better, but you can still see the bump on his poor, dear head," said a fresh, young voice. It was followed by indulgent, adult laughter. Then a mellow, pleasant voice spoke, a suave, kindly, masculine voice:

"Well, Mrs. Mellish, it shall be as you say, of course. I will merely tell the reporters that I have found my preserver, thanks to an enterprising young newspaper man, and that she wishes to remain anonymous. As to the young woman I saw yesterday, she may have saved somebody's life that day, but it most certainly wasn't mine."

"Then what did she say she had for?" cried the fresh, young voice.

"Ah," replied the mellow one, "solve me that riddle if you can."

"She wanted to act in the films, I expect."

"I shouldn't wonder," said a mature voice, unheard before.

"It's extraordinary," went on the mellow masculine one, "how well I remember your face as you bent over me, against the brightness of the sky. I could have picked you out among a thousand."

"*Anything* we can say," and it was the maturer lady's voice speaking now, "seems so—so hopelessly inadequate. I do wish your husband were in. It would be such a relief to pour our thanks and gratitude into his ear, too. But you'll come to dinner next Wednesday, won't you? Both of you?"

"We shall love to," said Mrs. Mellish.

"And as you're such a shy creature," went on the same lady, "it shall be a family party only,

and we'll go to a theater afterwards. We'll expect you at seven."

"Oh, then I can come too, if it's only the family," said the fresh, young voice, and the man said, "Yes, just this once, chickabiddy, as it's a special occasion—a very special one."

There was more talk of a general nature, then sounds of departure, and again Mr. Mellish heard his absence regretted. When they all seemed to have got into the car, and Mrs. Mellish was in the drawing room again, Mr. Mellish heard rapid footsteps on the stairs, and once more the pleasant, mellow voice spoke close by. "Mrs. Mellish, don't think me a sentimental old fool, but I should so like to keep that handkerchief you dropped, if I may. I should miss 'M. M.' sadly. I've had it by me for weeks now. May I?"

He heard his wife's shy, pleased laugh.

"Oh, please do keep it; please do! How—how nice of you!"

They were gone. The house was silent again. Mr. Mellish, announcing his presence with a little cough, parted the curtains, and entered the drawing room. His wife was standing by the window, watching, no doubt, the departure of the Home Secretary's car. She did not turn round as he came in.

"I suppose you heard," she said quietly.

"I heard," he repeated. "I—hardly liked to intrude just then. So I waited in the other room. Mary, you have made me a proud and happy man again."

She was silent.

"And if I doubted you," he went on, "it was you yourself who made me doubt. I only wanted the world to know what a heroine you were."

At the sound of that word she turned swiftly about, and there was something bright and fierce in her face.

"Yes," she cried in a clear, vibrant voice, "yes, I am a heroine. I am. You are perfectly right. I've been one for five years, Proctor Mellish, if you only knew it. For five long years I've borne with your indifference and your contempt. For five long years you've been comparing me unfavorably with every woman in the public eye, with every woman in history, with every woman everywhere. For five years you've taken no trouble to hide from me that you thought me dull, uninteresting, and tiresome; never listening to me, or only half listening, which is worse; never praising me; never noticing whether I were happy or not; never taking the slightest interest in what I thought or felt or suffered. Condescending to me. Oh, I dare say I was *dull,* but you *made* me dull.

"You made me think as poorly of myself as you thought of me. And so when that thing happened while I was away, my first thought was, 'How pleased Proctor would be if he knew that I'd done something startling at last!' And I felt I didn't want to tell you about it, for I knew you wouldn't be proud because I, Mary Mellish, had done it, but because your wife, Mrs. Proctor Mellish, had. But I was a fool. I longed to rouse your interest in me for once; I longed to make you look at me as—as you used to look when you first knew me. And so I told you, hoping you'd understand that it was only you I wanted to tell—and for a while I was almost happy."

He seemed about to speak, but she gave him no time. She hurried on.

"Well, I soon saw how disappointed you were because I wouldn't make myself known. I soon saw that. As if I could! Did it matter who saved his life as long as somebody did? And when that girl claimed to have done it, you would have forced me to expose her, regardless of my own feelings. And then when you doubted me, when you thought I had lied to you, I was glad, for it showed me the way out. I wasn't a heroine then, was I? A heroine! You called me that because in two minutes I did what any one in his senses would have done. What

about those five long years, Proctor? Those five long years of silent endurance? What about them? Yes, for that I am a heroine—and there are plenty like me—plenty. All patient women who are married to men like you are heroines, poor creatures!"

She stopped for breath, still aflame with pent-up indignation; but Proctor Mellish only sat with bowed head. He had nothing to say. Then gradually her expression, her whole bearing changed. Her face softened. Her arms dropped to her sides.

"Proctor," she whispered. "Proctor, have I—have I hurt you—terribly?"

He made no answer. He only put out his hands toward her. That was all. And she went to him.

And Then Face to Face

And Then Face to Face

WHEN Vincent Portal received his niece's letter he was amused at its simplicity and trustfulness. Although she must be twenty-three or four, she wrote like a child who had never had a rebuff. He answered it at once, and told her that he would be delighted to have her, and that he would expect her on the eighteenth, which was the date she herself had suggested.

On the sixteenth he wrote again, and said that he was very sorry to disappoint her, but on second thoughts he was afraid the experiment would be unsuccessful. He said he was unused to women about the house, and he felt sure she would make trouble, wittingly or unwittingly, with the servants. He said that he had never cared for her father—his brother—and that she was probably very like him, and that although he was Scotch himself he disliked the Scotch, and her accent would certainly get on his nerves.

Then to his chagrin a wire came from her that evening to say that she was leaving a day earlier, and would arrive on the seventeenth. She hoped

that would not inconvenience him. He thought of sending a wire to her, to stop her, but realized it was then too late. She was already on her way. The little surprise he had prepared for her had missed fire. By leaving twenty-four hours earlier she had placed him in a most uncomfortable position. It was his own fault, he supposed. His sense of humor had baited the trap, and he had fallen into it himself. Well, let her come, then.

She came on November 17th, as wet and bleak a morning as London could produce. The house, an old one, was in Westminster, not five minutes' walk from Big Ben, and as she drove up to the door in a taxi the air was quivering and humming with the eleven deep sonorous notes that were being released from the clock tower to travel round the earth. Alighting on the pavement as the last of the notes sounded, she felt there was something dramatic about her arrival; it was as though the curtain were about to go up on a new scene in a play that Fate had written for her. Let it be comedy, she thought. She had had enough of tragedy.

A butler opened the door to her, and said that Mr. Portal was sorry he could not be there to receive her, as he was obliged to be at his office, but that he looked forward to seeing her at a little after six that evening. Anna was relieved. She

wanted time to settle herself in her room and to write a letter to Dennis Craig, her fiancé, who was a young doctor at the Middlesex Hospital. She wanted to tell him, among other things, that she had arrived safely, and that he might come and see her, if all went well, the following evening.

The house, though admirable as a house, was gloomy and unlovely inside. The furniture was by no means the best Victorian, the colors were drab, the carpets ugly, the pictures numerous and undesirable. She tried to imagine, as she went up the stairs, what the man who surrounded himself with such unbeautiful things was like, for she had not seen her uncle since she was a child. He had been considered a promising but peculiar young man, and certainly, thanks to the money her grandfather had so unfairly left to him, he had done well enough. He had always been a man of very uncertain temper, difficult to get on with, and she knew that her father actually disliked him, though he refrained from saying so. But she was of such a calm and even temper herself that she felt certain she could get on with anybody, and her determination to come to London had led her to propose herself to him while she looked for a secretarial job. His letter had surprised her by its cordial tone. It had been far

kinder, far more human, than she had dared to expect.

Her room was on the third floor and at the back of the house, but she had a pleasant view from her windows of roofs and a small garden or two between the houses, and plenty of chimney pots of amusing shape. To an eye eager for town sights and sated with country ones, it was welcome enough. The room was heavily and stuffily furnished, but the bed seemed modern and comfortable, she thought, pressing it down with her hands, and there was plenty of hanging space. She was a tidy, happy, optimistic creature, and she enjoyed laying things neatly in drawers and making herself comfortable.

When she had unpacked and put away her clothes, she inspected the living rooms. The house seemed, even to her unsophisticated eye, to be quite unnecessarily ugly. She saw not a single object that pleased her, or did more than serve its purpose, or lack of purpose, as ungraciously as possible. The library was the best room, for there were plenty of books, and there were deep, leather chairs in which to read them, and if one didn't look at the prints on the walls, all of which represented the martyrdom of saints, one could at least be comfortable there. She spent the afternoon reading and sewing, as the rain continued, and resting after her journey.

Vincent Portal left the office at six, and walked home. He was a Civil Servant in the Treasury, and his work and his home were conveniently near together. He was conscious of a feeling of intense irritation, which he traced, easily enough, to the fact that his niece was now installed in his house for an indefinite period, and that she had come there at his own invitation. If she had been thrust upon him he might have regarded her presence philosophically, as he regarded an attack of the flu, but he had brought this calamity upon himself. His first letter to her was merely the prelude to the sort of jest he was fond of perpetrating. To have done an unselfish thing, even unintentionally, irked him. He had not had, he thanked Heaven, the smallest kindly impulse toward her. Those kindly impulses which so disgusted him, and which were, in his opinion, mere weaknesses, rarely came to him nowadays. Little by little, painstakingly and after years of effort, he had succeeded in eradicating from his nature every warm and human instinct, thus achieving an absolute freedom that he believed few men possessed.

His first serious effort in this direction took place while he was little more than a boy. He had given a friendly shopkeeper a bad half crown, and had later retraced his steps, a slave to conscience,

and had given him a good one in its place, explaining that it was a mistake, that he had meant to throw the bad one away, and that it had somehow got in among the other change in his pocket. But instead of feeling appeased and satisfied at having done the right thing, he had been furious with himself for what he considered his weakness. He had seen the shopkeeper drop the bad half crown unsuspectingly into the till. His act in going back had been merely silly. The passing of the bad coin had given him a few moments of real pleasure, while his subsequent act had only annoyed him. He made up his mind to become his own master, if it took him a lifetime to do it.

He had progressed very far since then. Quite recently he had deliberately foisted an error of his own, and an error of some importance, on to the shoulders of one of his colleagues in such a way that it looked, even to the man himself, that he must have made it. He waited for the "kick" of remorse for days, but it never came. He saw that absolute and entire freedom was within sight.

As he approached the house he noticed that the blind of one of the library windows had not been drawn down all the way, and that a light from it slanted out into the night. It was a quiet street, a cul-de-sac, and there was no one about. Obeying

one of those other impulses to which he was becoming increasingly subject, he looked in, under the blind. He saw what he had hoped to see, the figure of his niece sitting by the fire. It gave him pleasure to scrutinize the unconscious girl in this way, and he remained watching her for some moments. She was plainly dressed, and not particularly pretty, though she possessed a certain fresh and vigorous charm, due to her bright coloring and well-made figure. She kept looking at the clock, and from the expression of her face he judged her to be listening. Nervous? Excellent. Afraid of him probably; anxious to please, undoubtedly. She would be damnably pleasant, and he hated pleasantness. He hated all such contacts. What right had she to invite herself into his house and spy upon his life? Nervous? Good. He would give her something to be nervous about.

He opened the front door quietly with his latch-key, and closed it without a sound. Noiselessly he took off his hat and coat, and as noiselessly crossed the carpeted hall to the door of the library. With a quick twist of the knob he flung it open, and entered. Her little scream of alarm compensated him for his trouble. He turned a pleasantly smiling face toward her.

"My dear Anna, how delightful to see you! I'm

afraid I frightened you. I thought you would surely have heard me come in."

She composed herself with creditable quickness, and held out her hand.

"You did frighten me, Uncle Vincent. I was just thinking how still the house was when crash! —the door opened. Well, here I am, and delighted to be in London."

"You had a good journey, I hope?"

"Oh, yes. I love traveling. It's wonderful to be here, and I can't tell you how grateful I am. I hope you didn't think I was forward in suggesting myself, but you would have said so, wouldn't you, if you hadn't wanted me?"

"Most certainly I would. The pleasure is mine, my dear. Surely I could do no less for my only brother's only child." He added, "I hope you won't find it dull. I'm afraid I can't offer you any gayeties."

"Gayeties?" She smiled, a little sadly. "I don't want gayeties. I want work. Besides," she said, looking at him with frank, brown eyes, "I'm engaged to a young doctor at the Middlesex Hospital. His name is Dennis Craig. If I can see him from time to time I assure you I shall be perfectly happy."

"Engaged?" He was clearly surprised. "Then you mean to leave me almost at once?"

She shook her head.

"We can't afford to marry yet. We may have to wait a long time. A year, perhaps, or a year and a half."

"Ah, I see. Well, let's have a look at him."

Her face brightened.

"Oh! then may he come to-morrow evening? I do want you to meet him so much."

"Certainly. Ask him to dinner, at eight o'clock. I never entertain, so I shan't ask any one else."

Anna said it would be far nicer with just themselves; and later, as she dressed for dinner, she thought, "How extraordinary to find him so kind and agreeable. He's quite different from what I expected. So far he's easy enough to get on with. I must write to Dennis to-night."

Dennis Craig was an intelligent young man with a passion for his work, and an alert and critical mind. He had spent one interesting and profitable holiday in Vienna, where he had managed to absorb in two months as much of the theory of psychoanalysis as he felt would be useful to him in his profession. He was deeply interested in abnormalities and quick to appreciate normality, and the delightful normality of Anna Portal enchanted him. She was a strong, well-rounded character, full of the love of life, and the love of such a love as she and

Dennis felt for one another. He had known her since she was a child, and he had never thought of marrying any one else.

Her scribbled note to him the next day was a pleasant surprise, for he had had his doubts about the success of this visit.

> He couldn't be nicer [Anna wrote], and he wants you to dine, so come at eight, punctually.

He arrived at the door at eight exactly, and as he stood on the steps the golden notes of Big Ben hummed about his head like birds. Mr. Portal's greeting was everything that could have been desired, and Dennis found the atmosphere so agreeable that he even dared to kiss Anna's round, cool cheek.

At dinner, sitting opposite his host, he set his mind to work to solve the riddle of his personality —for to Dennis each individual he met presented a riddle, and Mr. Portal's, he thought, would take more solving than most. His manner was certainly agreeable, but it seemed to Dennis to be a sort of barrage, hiding something that the world never saw and little guessed. He talked, he thought, like a sham book agent, whose real and secret business is the selling of drugs. But there he pulled himself up.

He was going a little far, perhaps, in his similes, and without sufficient cause. But when Anna left them to their port for a long twenty minutes, something happened that put him on his guard again.

The butler, in pouring out a glass of port for his host, spilled a single drop on the tablecloth. Mr. Portal coughed, raised his eyes to the butler's face, lowered them again to that spot of red, and made a slight gesture with his hand. The butler, with a frightened and apologetic face, began removing the silver, the flowers, the glasses. Mr. Portal made affable conversation with his guest. Then the tablecloth was removed, deftly and quickly, a clean one substituted, and the various articles put back again. Once more the port was poured out, into a fresh glass, and this having been done successfully, the butler turned off the lights, leaving only the candlelight, and quietly left the room. Mr. Portal made no comment, and Dennis's only comments were mental ones. The whole thing seemed to him so odd, so unnecessary, so unhuman, that he made up his mind to say nothing about it to Anna, and it affected him most unpleasantly.

After dinner, when they had joined Anna in the library, Mr. Portal talked politics. He appeared to be a Conservative with broad views. "By all means let the socialists govern," he said, "if, by

governing, they can cure or even ameliorate one of the world's many ills."

And, a few minutes later, he said to Dennis:

"Yours is of all professions the most respectable, the most humane, and the one that does the most immediate good. You couldn't have chosen a finer one."

Dennis wouldn't admit that he had chosen it. He said that it had chosen him.

"It had a race," he said, "with criminology, but medicine got in first, by a short head. Some day," he added, "they may go into partnership."

"Criminology," mused Vincent Portal. "A fine word, but like so many fine, round words, it means little. We are all criminals, potentially, or in fact."

"Oh, no," protested Anna, "surely not all of us."

"Well, not you, my dear, at any rate," he answered.

"Not you, nor me, nor Dennis," she insisted, laughing.

Dennis went home thinking, "What a curious chap. Certainly he seems all right, and, except for that ridiculous exhibition of pomposity and love of bullying over the spot of port, no one could have been pleasanter. All the same, I get the impression, somehow, that he's being pleasant for an object. But, Good Lord, what object? He can't get

anything out of us, because there's nothing to get. There can't be any *purpose* behind it."

Anna went to bed in a rosy glow of optimism. Her uncle had said to her:

"That's a fine fellow. I like him. We'll have to see what can be done toward helping you two. Anyway, I'll begin making inquiries about a secretarial job for you at once."

When she had gone up he rang for Carshall, the butler, and instructed him to bring him, for the next few days, all letters, no matter to whom they were addressed, the moment they arrived. He then went upstairs himself in a very satisfied frame of mind.

Why am I pleased to-night? [he presently wrote in his diary]. Is it because I have been kind to those two young fools who mean nothing to me, or is it because of the little suprises I have in store for them? It almost seems—and this is a disturbing thought—that my pleasure comes from the first rather than from the second cause. Shall I leave it at that? Shall I play the silly and vulgar rôle of benevolent uncle, or shall I pursue the plans I made at dinner this evening, which will afford me a far more subtle and intellectual delight? If I can obtain pleasure—and it almost seems that I can—from doing what's called "good" as well

as from doing what's called "evil," does it matter, pleasure being the object, which course I pursue?

For some time he sat thinking, weighing his own sensations. Then he wrote:

I was wrong. The thought of playing the benevolent uncle bores and disgusts me. It is the thought of the other that I find pleasing and exhilarating. That is settled, then. Already I can see the whole drama in my mind, down to the final fall of the curtain. The play begins at once.

He locked the diary in the top drawer of his desk with one of the many keys on his keyring, and began to undress. He went to the large mirror over the mantel—the only mirror in the room—and unfastened his collar and tie, glancing at his face as he did so.

Something he saw in the glass attracted his attention, and his hands paused at their work. He stared at his reflection, then went nearer to the mirror and stared again. He saw, or thought he saw, a completely unfamiliar look. Some trick of light and shadow, he supposed, and, after turning his face this way and that experimentally, he went away

and fetched a lamp, which, thanks to its long cord, he was able to place on the mantel. But this time he saw nothing but his own puzzled and peering eyes looking back at him in the most normal way, and satisfied that there was now nothing unfamiliar about his face, he replaced the lamp and went on with his undressing. But before getting into bed he unlocked his diary once more, and wrote in it:

> To-night, as I was unfastening my collar in front of the mirror, an odd thing happened. My own face, to which I am thoroughly accustomed, suddenly looked different to me, as though *some one else* were looking back at me, very knowingly, too knowingly, out of the eyes. For an instant it startled me, but not unpleasantly, for I delight in the unusual. I am afraid, though, it was only an illusion created for me by the not very bright light and by the imperfect surface of my mirror.

Having recorded this small incident, he switched off the light, got into bed, and slept dreamlessly.

Dennis came to see Anna the next afternoon at five. The hospital being near at hand, he said he thought he would often be able to run in for five minutes or so. They sat on the leather-covered sofa in the library, talking.

"Well, my darling," said Anna, "tell me what you thought of him."

"A curious bird," said Dennis. "I can't make him out. But that's not surprising, as I've only seen him once."

"What makes you say you can't make him out?" she asked. "He seems to me so extremely kind and nice. A little forbidding to look at, perhaps, but he can't help that."

"I wasn't thinking of his looks, angel," said Dennis. "I think he's got an intelligent face." He was on the brink of telling her of the incident that had affected him so unpleasantly the night before, but decided, again, that he wouldn't. He saw no point in prejudicing her against her uncle. "Do the servants seem to like him?" he asked.

"Yes, they seem to, as far as one can tell. Why?"

"Oh, it's always a good sign if they do, that's all. Do you think you're going to be happy here, sweetest and most desirable serpent?"

"If I can see you nearly every day," she cried, "of course I'll be happy."

About a week later, Vincent Portal told Anna at dinner that he had spoken about her to a man in the Pensions Department who was wanting a secretary.

"I told him you had all the usual requirements,"

he said, "in addition to a charming personality and a quick brain, so go and see him to-morrow and talk things over with him; and if the salary suits, and you like Mr. Vesey-Roberts as well as I feel sure he will like you, I dare say the job is yours."

She was delighted, grateful, excited, and a little nervous. She kissed her uncle's cheek, ashamed that she hadn't done so before, and ashamed, too, of her reluctance to kiss that dark visage when he had been so kind and so thoughtful for her. She scribbled a note to Dennis at once.

> If I can get a job and keep it [she wrote] I don't see why we shouldn't be married quite soon, do you?

The next morning, a Saturday, she went to call on Mr. Vesey-Roberts at his house in Kensington. Although he was in no way remarkable—he was past middle age, stout, bald, matter-of-fact, and of no particular gifts—she was disposed to like him, and to feel that they might get on very well together. The work seemed really interesting, the salary was fair, and she agreed to begin work on Monday. His late secretary, who was leaving him to be married, would show her the ropes, and help her the first day. Mr. Vesey-Roberts shook her

hand, said he was quite satisfied that her Edinburgh training had been a good one, and that he would write to thank her uncle for his timely assistance.

She only saw her uncle at night. Even on Saturdays he absented himself from the house until dinner time, so she was obliged to wait till then to tell him her news. He said he was sure she would justify his expectations, and made light of his part in it. On Sunday night, when Dennis came to dinner, he added his thanks to hers, though he felt it was natural enough for an uncle to take a little trouble for an only niece, particularly such a niece as Anna.

That night Anna went to bed early to prepare herself for her first day's work. She was struck, as she undressed, by the almost uncanny stillness of the room and of the house. She heard Big Ben strike ten as she lay in bed, but no other sounds reached her, not even the rumble of traffic. It was like being in the country, she thought, and yet here they were, in the very heart of London. She was nearly asleep when it suddenly struck her that some one must have put a clock in the room during the day, and that its ticking had only just reached her consciousness. She sat up in bed and listened. It was a loud and regular ticking, the sort of sound that her small wrist watch, which was the only timepiece she possessed, was utterly incapable of making.

Odd she hadn't noticed the clock while she was undressing. She switched on the light, and to her surprise discovered that there was no clock in the room, although the sound seemed to come from within a few feet of her bed. Moreover, it had the loud, unhurried tick of a clock of some size. It must, she thought, be in the hall. She thrust her feet into bedroom slippers and went to look, but the hall was innocent of clocks, and, moreover, the ticking was louder inside her room than outside it. She closed the door again, puzzled. There was no room next to hers, and she was alone on that floor, the other two rooms, which were in the front of the house, being unfurnished. She discarded the idea that the sound might come from one of the servant's rooms upstairs. It was too near and too loud for that. Irritated and baffled, she got into bed again, and tried to ignore it. She hated a clock in her room at the best of times, and an invisible one was maddening.

It got on her nerves, presently. She began to think of strange warnings; of the death spider that made a ticking noise—or was she thinking of the death-watch beetle? But no death-watch beetle, she felt sure, ever ticked with such inexorable regularity. It seemed, finally, to be ticking inside her brain, so she pulled the bedclothes over her head, but all de-

sire to sleep was banished. She heard Big Ben strike eleven, twelve, one, two, and three. After that she must have fallen asleep, for she couldn't remember hearing it strike four. She woke tired, and with a headache, but tea revived her, and the ticking had mercifully stopped. She always breakfasted in her room, at her uncle's suggestion, for he didn't wish to see any one in the mornings, so she knew she couldn't ask him about it till the evening.

Her first day with Mr. Vesey-Roberts was something of a strain, but she believed that, thanks to the help she had received from the departing secretary, she had got through it creditably. In telling her uncle about it, she forgot, during dinner, to speak of the clock that had so interfered with her sleep, but before going up to bed she remembered it.

He said he couldn't imagine what it could have been, and offered to go to her room with her, to listen, but when they got there there was nothing to be heard. He smiled.

"All your mother's family were highly imaginative," he said.

"But I didn't imagine it," she protested.

"Well," he said, as he turned to go, "if you hear it again don't hesitate to come down and knock on my door."

She went to bed somewhat annoyed with herself

for having mentioned it, and soon fell asleep. But during the night something woke her, and she realized that once more the room was filled with that objectionable ticking. It certainly was not imagination. Indignantly she got up, slipped on a dressing gown, and went down to knock at her uncle's door. A moment later he emerged, looking like a Franciscan monk in his long, brown robe, and together they went up to her room.

"There," she said, "there's no imagination about that, is there?"

He turned a blank face toward her.

"But I hear nothing at all."

"Do you mean to say," she cried, "that you can't hear it?"

"My dear Anna, I assure you I hear nothing at all, and my ears are as good as any one's."

"Well, I must be mad," she exclaimed. "It's as loud as though it were in this very room."

"Are you sure it doesn't sound as if it were inside your own head? Our ears play tricks sometimes."

"At moments it does," she admitted, "but I'm certain it isn't. I'm certain it's a clock."

"We could wake the servants, I suppose, though I dislike doing so," he said. "You evidently don't believe me. Let us see what they have to say."

But she stopped him.

"No, no," she protested. "I don't mean that. I do believe you don't hear it, but I can't believe I don't hear it. Never mind. Perhaps it will stop soon."

"Go back to bed," he advised, "and you'll soon forget all about it. I remember hearing your mother say that your Aunt Margaret heard something of the sort at times." He bade her good night and departed.

She could hardly remember her Aunt Margaret, and she had never heard before that she was in any way odd, and she lay awake thinking about her, and wondering what more there was to know, and if it could possibly be true that the ticking was purely imaginary. She heard Big Ben strike four, and shortly after the ticking stopped, and she fell asleep.

"I shouldn't like many more nights like this," she said to herself the next morning. "I'll begin to believe there really is something wrong with me."

She told Dennis about it the next time he came to see her.

"My blessed infant," he said, "if you hear ticking at night, you rest assured that there's a clock somewhere, and that it's outside your head, not inside. If you heard it, and your esteemed uncle

didn't, tell him I will gladly supply him with the address of an ear specialist, or purchase for him, if he won't buy it for himself, one of those handy little acousticons they advertise in the magazines."

"But, Dennis, he hears as well as I do, and if he couldn't hear it. . . ."

"How do I know he couldn't hear it?"

"But what earthly reason would he have had for saying he didn't hear it if he did?"

"Don't ask me for reasons, my lamb. I only know he strikes me as being a very odd bird."

"Oh, Dennis! He's the only relation I have in the world."

"Never mind. I hope to be a much nearer one myself before long," he returned.

For two nights after this she slept soundly and heard nothing, which was an immense relief to her. But on the third night, Vincent Portal, who had been reading until a late hour in his room, got up, listened at the door, assured himself that the house was quiet, and, wrapping the folds of his long, brown dressing gown round him, mounted the stairs. He went up like a ghost. Not a stair creaked, and his footfalls on the thick carpet were soundless. He stopped outside Anna's door, ran his hand along the wall, pushed aside an old, framed photograph of some forgotten group, and, sliding his hand

behind it, opened a little door neatly cut in the wall paper. The previous owner of the house had shown him this hiding-place twenty years ago, and he had never found a use for it till now. He took out a clock he had concealed there, gave it a short winding, and replaced it. Then he closed the door, straightened the picture, and went soundlessly down the stairs again.

Not many days later Anna came back from her work with a worried and distressed look on her round, young face. She went into the library, dropped into a chair, and sat for some time without moving. Then she got up, and, sitting down at the writing table, wrote a hasty note to Dennis, for she didn't expect to see him till the following evening.

> Darling. I've got bad news. I've been sacked. Given a month's pay in lieu of notice. Mr. Vesey-Roberts did it as nicely as he could, I suppose, but I thought he looked at me as if he would be very glad when I'd gone. He said that he was afraid I wasn't experienced enough, but I feel there must be some other reason, for I swear I haven't made a mistake worthy of the name since I've been there, and I thought we were getting on beautifully. Still, the month's pay in advance shows how badly he

wanted to get rid of me. Uncle Vincent will be dreadfully disappointed. He's taken such an interest, and was so keen on my going there. But I've disappointed myself most of all. I wanted you to know before you came tomorrow night. That hateful ticking has been going on again. Do you think I'm haunted?

Vincent Portal was very much distressed at her news. He said he would see Vesey-Roberts the next day, and would try to find out what the trouble was. Anna begged him not to.

"It will only make it uncomfortable for him," she said. "Naturally he won't like to say, 'Your niece is incompetent.' And it would put you in the wrong for having recommended me."

He told her not to worry, that he would soon find her another position, and that night he took her to the theater to change her thoughts.

When he went up to bed, later, he felt in a particularly agreeable and felicitous mood. He had opened up for himself a whole new world of sensation, whose boundaries seemed almost limitless. And he saw that he would be able to move in it with entire freedom. He took the most extreme and unexpected pleasure in what he was doing, and he had not suffered the smallest twinge of remorse. That inglorious weakness from which others suf-

fered, a degrading servitude to the vulgar idea of right, was behind him now for ever. He thought with amusement of the readiness with which Vesey-Roberts had responded to his hint that day at lunch.

He had believed, he said, that his niece was completely cured. Poor child, it was a terrible thing for her. There was this strong taint of insanity in the mother's family, and his brother never knew it until too late. Fortunately there was only the one child, and they had hoped she might escape it, but before she was nine she had begun to show signs of mental and moral depravity. She lied, stole, tortured animals, and had to be sent away to a home. Two years ago she had been pronounced completely cured, and in this belief, and knowing that she had gone in for a thorough business training in Edinburgh, he had tried to help her, for during her sane periods she was intelligent and lovable enough. But within the last few days there had been unmistakable signs of a return of the trouble, and he had felt it his unpleasant duty to warn him.

Vesey-Roberts had been frightened, grateful, shocked. Ten minutes after his return to his office, Anna left it, chagrined and humiliated.

"And not a twinge, not a tremor of that disease

of the imagination they call remorse," he said to himself, as he began to undress. As was his habit, he walked toward the mirror to unfasten his collar and tie, and, remembering the strange illusion of that other night, he looked closely at himself. Once more his attention was arrested by the look in his own eyes. It was there again, that cunning, *knowing* look, amused, admiring, mocking, intelligent, but seeming to spring from an intelligence not his own.

"Good God!" he thought. "This is an odd thing. I have a feeling that when I look away, those other eyes keep on steadily looking at me." He moved about in front of the mirror, grimaced, smiled, frowned, and his reflection grimaced, smiled, and frowned when he did, but it struck him that it wasn't so much reflecting him as *imitating* him. He left the glass abruptly.

"This is really enchanting," he said to himself, to mask the fear in his heart. "The unusual, the abnormal so seldom obtrudes itself into ordinary existence." He returned to the glass. "There, it has changed now. That face is my own, and is controlled by my own mind. The other has gone."

He took out his diary and wrote:

If I were a weak and sentimental moralist, I could make a Sunday school tale out of this

with which to frighten naughty children. I might say that by giving in to "evil" impulses I was unconsciously molding and altering my outward form to suit the spirit within. But that does not happen to be accurate. What I actually caught a glimpse of, I believe, was a being with independent thoughts, and an intelligence of its own. This interests me enormously. Nowadays, when science leads us to doubt the reality of matter, and proves to us that what seem to be the most solid and material substances are, in fact, the most unmaterial, it is both easy and pleasant to imagine, conversely, that abstract and intangible things have the most real and actual existence.

How do I know, for instance, that my reflection, as I see it in a mirror, or in a pool of water, or in the plate-glass window of a Bond Street shop, has not a separate existence, quite apart from me and as real as my own? It may, for all I know, think its own thoughts, live its own individual life, only choosing to confront me now and again through the agency of some polished surface. To-night and that other night, I may have chanced to catch it at its tricks, and having caught it once or twice in this way, I shall doubtless catch it again. Certainly I shall watch for it very closely.

And having written this, and refused fear an entrance to his mind, he went to bed.

Dennis had a good deal to say about Mr. Vesey-Roberts the next evening. Anna incompetent! He hoped that when Mr. Vesey-Roberts died he'd bequeath his cranium to the governors of the British Museum, who would be excusable in thinking it the skull of a poor specimen of Neanderthal Man.

When Vincent Portal came in he tried to explain his friend's behavior by saying that he had had a good deal of domestic trouble of late which had made him more exacting and difficult to get on with.

"I should have realized that earlier," he said. "But we shall soon find a better job for her with a more reasonable man."

It was two weeks, however, before he could tell Anna of another opening. He had been to great trouble, she knew, to find one, and she was proportionately grateful. This time it was a City official, a man named Purchase, and Vincent Portal said that while he didn't know him, except in the most casual way, he had always heard him very well spoken of. Anna went to see him at once. She didn't particularly like the look of him, and the work seemed far less interesting than the other, but she decided that after all the trouble her uncle had taken, and as Mr. Purchase seemed anxious for her

to come, she would at least give it a trial. She began work on a Monday, and by the following Friday she had got accustomed to both it and her employer.

All would have been well but for that ticking at night. She couldn't ask Dennis to come and listen as she never knew when it would begin, and it was generally quite late at night. She couldn't go on complaining about it to her uncle, especially when he was convinced it was only her imagination, and as the room she occupied was the only furnished guest room in the house, she could hardly ask to be moved. She therefore put up with it, but she knew it was getting badly on her nerves.

She had been nearly a month with her City official when the blow fell. His round face redder than ever, pompous, but trying to be kind, blowing out his cheeks, stammering, hesitating, and all the time looking at her nervously, he told her he was afraid the work was too difficult for her, and that she hadn't taken hold in the way he had hoped she would. He added that he was sorry to lose her, as in other ways they had got on very well. When she asked him exactly in what way she had failed, he grew confused, and, instead of replying, thrust a month's salary into her hands, and dismissed her as if she had been an offending servant.

Anna refused it, angry and distressed. He proffered it again, and she told him, fiercely, that she wouldn't touch it. He recoiled from her as though he were afraid of her; in fact she saw what was plainly terror in his eyes. With an abrupt good-bye she took her hat and coat and left the place, and walked, faster than she had ever walked in her life, back to her uncle's house. She was pale with anger, mystified, humiliated. What was wrong with her? What had she done? She was conscious of no failures, no mistakes. The work had been so easy as to be dull. How had she displeased, and when? There must be something odd about her that she wasn't conscious of. Didn't Dennis see it? Didn't her uncle? What caused these men to want, suddenly, to be rid of her? The reasons they gave were not, she was convinced, the right ones. All her self-confidence went from her. She ran up to her room, threw herself on her bed, and cried.

Her uncle was, as before, grieved, concerned, and ready to offer comfort. Purchase, he said, was a common fellow when all was said and done; he had only thought she might get on with him for the present, or until something more interesting turned up.

"But I *was* getting on!" Anna cried. "I was."

"Oh, well," he said, "don't lose courage, my

dear. We'll have one more try, and if that fails we'll see if there isn't some other work to which you are perhaps more suited."

"But it does suit me. I can do secretarial work. I like it," she protested.

"Then clearly these men must be to blame."

"It's so strange," she persisted. "One minute we were getting on perfectly well, and planning future work, and then the next minute I was being dismissed."

"You shan't have this bother again," he said. "I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"It's not your fault, Uncle Vincent. You've been kindness itself. Only it's so humiliating."

Dennis was in a fury when he saw how deeply it had affected her.

"Is there anything wrong with me?" she asked him. "Is there something repulsive or odd about me? Perhaps you wouldn't tell me even if there were."

He soon disabused her mind of any such fantastic ideas.

"I wish to heaven we could be married tomorrow!" he exclaimed. "There's something about this damned house——"

She cried, "Hush, Dennis! I won't allow you to say that."

"All the same," he replied, "I don't mind telling you that Uncle Vincent and the house are getting on my nerves. You've been unlucky here. And there's that infernal clock."

"I'm lucky to be here at all," she retorted.

"As soon as my brother-in-law starts for China," said Dennis, "you're going to stay with my sister. I'm going to get you away from here."

"I'm not going to do anything that might hurt his feelings," she answered.

Dennis was hopeful of finding her work with some doctor of his acquaintance, but meanwhile Vincent Portal was bestirring himself on her behalf, and one day not very long after this he told her that a woman whom he knew very slightly wanted a secretary immediately, and had asked him to help her.

"Naturally I spoke of you," he said. "I have explained the situation to her, and she wants you to go and see her as soon as possible. She lives just off Belgrave Square."

Anna was delighted at the idea of working for a woman, and although she found Mrs. Marcellus the not very attractive wife of a still less attractive South African mining man, she made up her mind to go to her for four hours a day. She had social

ambitions, it seemed, and was planning an intensive campaign for the spring season.

Mrs. Marcellus was kind, vulgar, but easy to get on with, and the work was easy and uninteresting. Anna spent the first morning writing for servants' references and interviewing between-maids, and attending to Mrs. Marcellus's correspondence which had been allowed to accumulate alarmingly. The work of the succeeding days was much the same, and wouldn't have overtaxed, Anna told Dennis, the brain of a child.

But about ten days later the early post brought her a letter from her employer, accompanied by a check for not one, but two months' salary in advance.

> My dear Miss Portal,—
>
> I am very much grieved to tell you that I find I shall need some one more used to the ways of London society than you are, and on whose knowledge I can really depend. In every other way I have found you perfectly satisfactory. I hope you will accept an extra month's salary by way of compensation for any disappointment or trouble I may have caused you.
>
> Yours very truly,
>
> Edna D. Marcellus

It seemed, to Anna, like a blow in the face. It stunned her. This woman, like the two men, had

wanted desperately to be rid of her. Why? Why? She wondered if Dennis and her uncle could be hiding something from her, some fault or peculiarity of speech or manner of which she knew nothing, and of which they were too loyal to speak. Unable to bear her own distress of mind, she sent the maid out with a note to the hospital, asking Dennis if he could possibly see her for a few minutes, and promising him that she would be in the house all day.

He came at twelve, and turned white with fury and bewilderment when he heard of this last affront.

"I am going to see that woman," he said. "Where does she live? I'll go at once."

But she implored him not to.

"She will only tell you what she's told me, naturally. She's perfectly within her rights. But, Dennis, why, why do they all act like this? There's something wrong with me, there must be. I'm repulsive to people in some way, or I do and say queer things unconsciously."

He used forceful and not very delicate language, and succeeded in comforting and assuring her, but he could see that she had been deeply hurt, and the knowledge worried and distressed him.

He made her swear that she would accept no more positions that came to her through her uncle. He promised to come the next day at the same time,

and to write to her that same evening. And he implored her to spend the afternoon at a cinema or matinée, and forget her worries. Then he snatched up his hat and rushed away, leaving her considerably happier. But before evening her doubts and suspicions returned, and she made up her mind that she would watch herself closely.

Her uncle, too, was much upset when she told him the news.

"Well, my dear," he said, "it's very extraordinary. Of course, I've no way of judging what you can do in the secretarial line, but I feel sure these people have been difficult to please. Now suppose, after I've gone up to bed—I'm going early to-night —you sit down at the writing table, and write me a short biography of your life. Let me see how you string your words together, and how you form your sentences. Perhaps I can help you."

She agreed to do this, and after a rubber of two-handed bridge, he went up to his room. She sat down at the big, heavy writing table, took up a pen, opened the blotting book, and saw a half-written letter lying inside it. Her eye was at once caught by her own name, and by the word "lunacy"; and although Anna was the soul of honor, and could only account for this act afterwards by the fact that she was, at the time, in great mental distress, she read

the letter through, and horror settled down upon her soul like a plague of evil black flies.

DEAR DR. SANGERSON,—

I am writing to you, as the greatest authority on lunacy in England to-day, to ask if you will come to my house at some time convenient to yourself, to see and talk to my niece, Anna Portal. She has been staying with me for a few months, since the death of her parents, and I am extremely perturbed as to her mental condition. There was, I regret to say, a strong taint of insanity in the mother's family, and I am afraid this unfortunate girl—she is not yet twenty-three—has not escaped it. She talks strangely, is, at times, quite unconscious of her own actions, hears imaginary sounds, and has recently been trying, without success, to earn her living as a secretary, but owing to these peculiarities, her employers cannot, of course, keep her. She is engaged to a young man who, though he now realizes how she is afflicted, does not dare to break with her for fear of making her worse. If you would be so good as to call——

There the letter broke off. Something had interrupted her uncle, and he had since forgotten it. He was writing, she remembered, just before dinner

was announced. She laid the letter down with hands like ice, feeling physically sick with horror, as though she had been picked up, violently shaken, and set down again in a ruined world. With dragging feet she went out of the room and up the stairs to her own bedroom, swaying, weak, holding to the banister for support, crushed and shattered.

Her uncle heard her go past the door. She would have read the letter now. He smiled to himself, and getting out his diary, he wrote:

> Things are progressing. Everything goes according to plan, and by to-morrow night I shall have embarked for the first time in my life upon actual crime. It has taken me years to reach this point, and unless I am very much mistaken as to the state of my mental emancipation, I shall never feel the smallest twinge of remorse. And what is of equal importance, I shall never be suspected.
>
> I suppose few men would keep such a diary as this, but to do so affords me the keenest pleasure, and it can do me no harm. While I live, no one will ever see it. After I am dead, any one who wishes to may see it. The whole world may see it, and learn that one man at least disdained to move with the herd; that one man at least was mentally, spiritually, and morally a free agent.

He got up, humming to himself, and went slowly toward the mirror. Ever since coming into the room he had felt a desire to look into it, but had refrained. No, not from fear, he told himself. From a sort of perversity, as though he were keeping some one waiting, intentionally and with malice. He had no sooner confronted it than he said, aloud, but in a low voice:

"Ah, so you're there again, are you?"

It was himself, yet not himself. Had he chosen to let his imagination have full play he might have said that he was looking at the materialization, or, better perhaps, exteriorization, of some part or phase of himself. He looked closely into the eyes, approaching his face to the mirror, and the reflection approached its face, and the two, alike and yet unlike, stared at one another. Then an experiment suggested itself. He closed his eyes, stood upright, raised his arms high above his head, and then opened his eyes again. And in this position he remained, transfixed with horror. His reflection had remained perfectly motionless, leaning forward with its hands resting on the mantel as his had been a moment before, and it was now watching him, cunningly and malignantly.

With a cry he recoiled from the glass, shrank back, across the room, every nerve in his body taut

and outraged. Impossible, incredible! This was too much; this was going too far. He had played with an idea, he now found it a fact, and a fact full of ghastly inferences, and horror unspeakable. For a good five minutes he remained clutching the window curtains, as far from the mirror as he could get, but gradually the blood returned to his heart, and he was ready to swear that his eyes had played tricks with him. Making an effort to control his still trembling legs, he rapidly crossed the room, passing in front of the mirror without a glance, gained the door, unlocked it, and rang the bell. Carshall, the butler, who was downstairs locking up the doors and windows, came hurrying up to answer it.

"Bring me whiskey and soda," said Vincent Portal, "and quickly, if you please."

When the butler came back with the tray he was himself again.

"Carshall," he said, "I must sell that mirror or have it done over. Look at it. Don't you think the glass is in a very bad state? It's getting so that I hardly recognize myself in it."

Carshall approached and examined it.

"The color's bad, sir," he said. "Greenish-like. But I don't know as I'd say it wanted doing over. It's not cracked, like some. Pity to get rid of it,

I think, since you ask me, sir. Will you be wanting anything further to-night, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you. Miss Portal has gone up, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. She didn't stay down long to-night."

"She seemed to me very depressed this evening," her uncle said. Such remarks, when repeated to the coroner by the servants, have an effect.

Carshall said the weather was enough to depress anybody, and departed, wondering at his employer's affability.

Vincent Portal drank a strong whiskey and soda, and presently, convinced that he had nothing now to fear, he went to the mirror again. He saw only himself, just as he had expected. That "other self" —he hardly knew what else to call it—had gone.

Relieved, he sat down at his desk, and spent a full hour with pencil and paper, and a letter of Anna's open in front of him. He was composing a short note, but not in his own handwriting. He burnt twenty attempts before one satisfied him, and that one he put away carefully in his pocket-book.

The next morning he went up early and knocked on Anna's door. She opened it a bare half-inch, and he told her he had slept very badly, and asked her if she would be so good as to go to the chemist's

during the day, and have made up for him a prescription which she would find downstairs on the hall table. It was for some powders that he sometimes took when he couldn't sleep, and he was very much annoyed to find, during the night, that he was out of them.

Anna said she would be certain to do this. Her voice sounded muffled, as though she were crying, or had been. He called out "Good-bye," and went downstairs again. He looked inside the writing pad in the library and found the letter. It had served its purpose. He tore it up and burned the pieces.

Anna thought it as well, when she received Dennis's letter, that he was unable to come that day. She didn't feel able to see him. She was unspeakably unhappy, and alternated between the conviction that she was just as sane as any one could be, and the disheartening knowledge that insane people were nearly always convinced of their own sanity. At the thought of giving up Dennis her heart seemed to die in her body. Her world was ruined; she didn't care whether she lived or died, and she sat in the library all the morning like a dumb creature, and never even raised her eyes when Carshall spoke to her. After lunch she went out and bought the sleeping powders. She meant to

ask her uncle if she, too, might take one before going to bed. She couldn't endure another such night as the one she had just been through.

She made up her mind not to tell him she had read the letter. The thing was too awful to discuss with him. If it were true, she would see the doctor when he came. At the moment she didn't care what happened to her. She didn't want to see any one, or to speak. Only to be left alone.

She got through the day somehow, and then came the ordeal of dinner. Vincent Portal said, while Carshall was putting the dessert on the table:

"Anna, you don't look at all well. You mustn't let these little disappointments weigh on your mind. I shall have to take you away to Brighton for a week or two if this goes on."

She said, smiling rather wanly, that she was all right, and that he needn't worry about her. At ten she started up to bed, but before going she asked:

"What about those sleeping powders? Do you think I might take one? I slept badly last night, too, and I do so want to go to sleep to-night."

"Of course, my dear child," he cried, "of course. Take the box up with you. I'll just take two out for myself."

"Two? Is that the dose?" she inquired, as he gave them to her.

"It says one on the box," he answered, "but if you want to be sure of sleeping I should certainly take two. I always do. They're perfectly harmless. I've taken hundreds."

She thanked him and went upstairs. Her face was a piteous sight, and he saw that she could scarcely keep from tears.

A little later he, too, went up. He had almost forgotten the incident of the night before until he opened the door of his room, but twenty-four hours had dimmed the sharpness of his sensations, and now, as he turned on the light, he felt nothing but a mild curiosity which he meant, presently, to gratify. After locking the door, he went to his desk, without a glance at the mirror, and took out his diary. Over this he sat for more than half an hour, writing busily. He wrote in it with a clear, firm hand that he was entirely free from any troubling qualms or compunctions, and that he looked forward with the keenest and most pleasurable anticipation to what he was about to do.

> If my niece had not suggested taking the powders herself [he wrote], I would have suggested it, or found some way of giving them to her without her knowledge. But she played into my hands by asking for them. One would

make her sleep soundly; two will make her very difficult to wake. At about twelve I will go to her room, close the window, and turn on the gas. The little note I have composed, which is in its way a gem, I will leave on her dressing table. Verdict: "Suicide while temporarily insane." It will be a little surprise for that self-satisfied young fool, Dennis. And for me, a triumph and a milestone.

He decided that he would get into his dressing gown now and read or doze until twelve. By a quarter-past twelve he would be in bed and asleep. An agreeable thought.

He left his diary open on the desk, because he decided it would be interesting to add a few words later, when he returned from his niece's room. Just a line or two, to prove to himself that his nerves were quite unaffected by what he had done. It would one day be, he thought, a diary of some value. After his death he would bequeath it to the pathologists as some men bequeath their bodies or brains to the surgeons.

He began to undress. The mirror invited him, and waited for him. Should he look into it now, or later? Now, something in his brain seemed to urge. Well, now or later, it made no difference to

him. The thing was a phantom, a fallacy of vision, seen "as in a glass, darkly"; or else it was the supernormal impinging upon the normal; and either way it was a phase of his own brain, of his own personality, and therefore could not be inimical to him.

It struck him that the house and the room, too, were uncannily still. He was irritated by the intrusion of these impressions and imaginings, because they showed him that his nerves were not as steady as he could have wished. Nevertheless, they were steady enough to enable him to go straight to the mirror and look into it. He was not afraid. He would go now. He walked firmly and nonchalantly toward it, as though playing a part for an invisible spectator. Afraid? Not he. He delighted in the unusual. One, two, three, four, five, six paces, and he was there, in front of it. In front of it, facing it, looking into it . . . well then, why . . . ?

He stood there, rigid, transfixed, stricken with a terror such as few men can ever have known, while the color drained out of his face and the blood out of his heart, and his heart gave one sickening jerk in his body, like the kick of a rabbit that has been shot in the head. He was standing four-square with the glass, facing it, and no more than a foot from it, *and yet there was no reflection of himself at all.* He

saw the wall at his back, dimly in the dim light; he saw the table, and a chair with his coat flung over it, but behind him, in some corner of the room, something breathed, stirred, moved, crept stealthily and purposefully toward him. . . .

Anna, about to spill those white powders into a glass, heard a scream. She slipped on her dressing gown, ran to the door, listened, cried, "Carshall! Uncle Vincent!" heard another scream, and ran down to her uncle's door, whence the cries came. It was locked. She shook the knob, crying out, "Uncle Vincent! Uncle Vincent! Unlock the door!" Inside she thought she heard not one voice, but two—one agonized and inhuman with terror, the other inhuman and horrible with mockery and menace. She fled down the stairs and along to the front door, unlocked it, flung it wide open, and screamed, "Help! Help!" again and again, and was rewarded by the sound of heavy, running feet. A policeman, torch in hand, rounded the corner of the street, and blew a whistle as he came.

"Now then, Miss, what's the matter here?"

"Murder!" she cried. "My uncle is being murdered, upstairs."

They ran in together, meeting Carshall coming up from the basement, and struggling into his

coat. "Upstairs, this way," cried the fleet Anna, her blue dressing gown streaming out behind her. She led the two men to her uncle's door. "There," she cried. "In there. Don't you hear them?"

The frenzied and the mocking voices continued, broken by screams. Again and again the policeman and Carshall called out, and put their shoulders to the door. It resisted them.

"What's up, mate?" cried a bigger policeman who came trampling up the stairs.

"Murder, sounds like," said the first. "All together, now, and we'll have the door in. Stand back, Miss."

The voices inside ceased on a shrill final scream as the door crashed in. The room was in wild disorder. The bedclothes had been clawed off the bed, chairs were broken and overturned, a lamp lay shattered on the floor, and against the wall, in such a position that it seemed to have been hurled there with horrible force, lay the limp, dead body of Vincent Portal.

"Search the room," ordered policeman number one. "I'll guard the door."

Carshall and policeman number two searched the room. They searched it very thoroughly. They looked under the bed, in the cupboards, behind the

curtains, up the inadequate chimney, out on the window ledge, everywhere.

"My God!" cried Carshall, white and trembling. "There was two people in here a minute ago."

"Couldn't 'ave been," said the second policeman.

(1)

THE END

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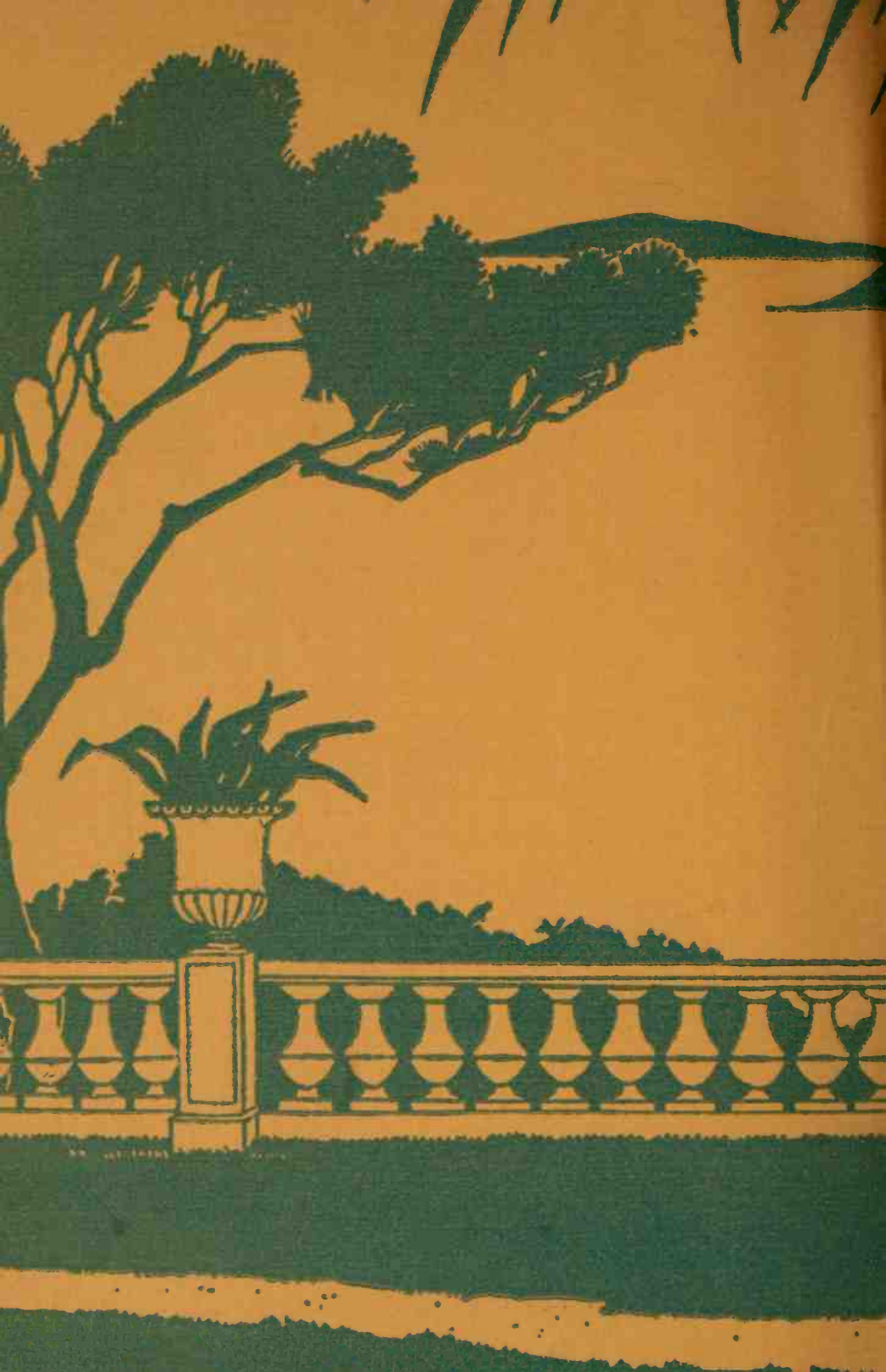
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